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*THE GREAT BEYOND*



# THE GREAT BEYOND

BY

*Maurice Maeterlinck*



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NEW YORK

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## Prelude

This book is the sixth of a series called by a French critic my "Pascalian series." I am not vain enough to believe that he wanted to compare me with Pascal. He simply meant that the form of my notes reminded him of the immortal *Pensées* of the greatest of French prose-writers, this is only a matter of typography.

The titles of the five first volumes, published in Paris by Fasquelle are: "Avant le Grand Silence," 1934; "Le Sablier," 1935; "L'Ombre des Ailes," 1936; "Devant Dieu," 1937; "La Grande Porte," 1938.

These notes or *pensées*, if they should be given a title they do not claim, speak of God, of the universe, of the infinite, and of eternity, of naught and of other worlds, of human destiny, of the unknowable, of life before birth and after death, of all the turmoil in us, above and beyond reason or practical everyday consciousness, of joy and sorrow and of everything that remains untold, of

thoughts that seldom occur, of matters reaching depths that man does not like to explore, of all that cannot be found in the best sellers of the literary industry.



It seems to me that in the best novels certain thoughts draw our attention but they are drowned in a flood of details relating to events without much interest, because they have almost always been the same since the beginning of theatre and books. Disregarding the story I could have constructed, I am presenting you with the thoughts it would have probably begotten, naked and without hackneyed trimmings, since you do not have any time to waste. At least they have the advantage of not lingering on abject, frivolous or petty incidents. They raise more questions than can be answered. But we have to admit that if one of the problems brought up was solved, the universe would hold no secrets; indeed, all pieces fit together; and the solution of one essential point would put an end to all of our doubts.



Most certainly you will learn little from them,

but they might set you thinking. It is not bad to stir the sleepy recesses of the mind sometimes.

They are presented without any plan, at random as if born of dreams or of clashes of ideas. They are on the borderline of contradictions and repetitions; but contradiction and repetition bear witness to the integrity, sincerity and sometimes also to the wavering of thought.

It would have been easy to arrange them more systematically, but too strict a classification breeds monotony, discourages the reader and is easily taken for pedantry. It is true that I could have weeded my humble garden more carefully; but I have often found during my relaxation as an amateur gardener that by hoeing out too much, we remove as many flowers-to-be as weeds, that in the end almost nothing is left and that a total, unassuming silence would have been preferable to begin with.



Henry Bidou, the keenest and the most scholarly of French critics, wrote the following in the "Journal des Débats," about my last book "La Grande Porte" which is also and above all, a quest for the divine:

“The author perceives in the depth of his conscience a greater God and does not seem to fear the objection which arises forthwith, namely, that this God would be a creation of his mind too.”

Of course, it would be a creation of my mind. How could it be anything else? It would be acceptable only if better than the others. It is up to me to attempt it, up to you to choose and improve it. We have no reason whatever to believe that this creation may come to us from the outside.

“But,” continues Henry Bidou, “is it possible to define those problems by any other means than reason? To this one can answer that for the last five decades the universe has revealed itself so stupendously inhuman, in its structure, in its size, through its dimly perceived laws, that reason lost much of its credit as a principle of universal explanation. In spite of his having explored the far reaches of science, Maeterlinck does not seem to be concerned with that. He still believes that the universe can be conquered with the same old spiritual weapons; except for some minor details, his whole book could have been written by a humanist of the XVIth century.”



I do believe indeed that the stupendous discoveries of the last fifty or seventy-five years did not add anything to what the humanist of the XVIth century knew of the essential questions of human destiny. The foundations of faith alone have been seriously shaken. As for everything else, what if the universe be millions of times wider than the universe of four centuries ago, what if billions of stars come out of the heavenly abysses to join the ones already known, if the infinite of the infinitely small be as infinite, as boisterously alive, as inexorable as the infinite of the infinitely great; we are still at the same point when we want to know what soul and mind are responsible for all that exists, what we are called to do on this earth, why we suffer down here, where we come from, where we are going, and so many terrifying questions that we have addressed for centuries to the ever silent heavens.

I still trust the old weapons, because there are no others.

We lag hundreds of years behind the universe. And only today do we realize this backwardness and try to make up for it.

All this, for lack of anything better. If you should find something else, if you should believe

in progress, I am ready to destroy the old weapons.



Did all the recent discoveries raise the moral ceiling of man, that is, his character, his sentiments, his general ideas, his everyday thoughts, his spiritual horizon? On the contrary, it seems that the more boundless did the skies become, the more the walls of the home in which he lives shrink, and the lower its roof becomes. The more he knows about the abode of the stars, the deeper he sinks under the ground where prosper the moles. The more he discovered—following the example of social insects, or prodded by the same instinct—the power of the state of which he believed himself to be master, the more unbearable a prison he made of it.

He and others like him believed that by crowding in the shadow, they would create light; would learn all things, and that it was enough to think of the earth alone in order to have a complete idea about the universe and to replace a God who could never be seen.

They were forgetting or did not notice that one can very well be a great engineer, a great mathe-

matician and even a great astronomer and still remain an exploiter and a scoundrel.



It is difficult to find and choose one's leaders. Even the Christians who should live above other men and listen only to heaven do not succeed in doing so; and in most of the monasteries one always finds, except for one or two saintly men and women, a multitude of monks and nuns as stupid, as selfish, as malicious and more hypocritical than in any other group.

Up to now, man was vile by nature. He has always been, which does not mean that he will always be. It is difficult to find a force or an idea which would compel him to look up higher than his feet. The dog too has only base ideas, but the love for his master makes him leave the muddy gutter and the evil-smelling stump and compels him to lift his eyes. Man had love for his God, but he does not have a God anymore, or rather his God does not have a name anymore. He should be given one again. It is not impossible, for trying to find one is almost finding it.



Why should not Christianity, for example, supply the essential factors of an acceptable religion? It would be enough to relieve it of the loathsome dogma of eternal hell which will always be contrary to the reason and heart of man. It will also have to be cleared of a certain amount of nonsense and inexcusable foolishness which are imbedded in its worship, in its history and in its moral, after which the face of the Man-God, that is of the most perfect man and the best God we have ever known and we can ever hope for, will appear in all its kindness, and all its pure beauty.

God can be given any name provided he retains his intelligence, his common sense and all the virtues of a decent man.

What if a rejuvenated religion promises us a scientifically improbable survival? As soon as this survival is not threatened by unjust and frightful reprisals, it becomes perfectly admissible, for no matter what happens and what we think, it is irrevocably certain that we will still exist after our death, since nothing can disappear or be annihilated on earth or in the skies, nor "fall out of the universe," as Marcus Aurelius already said two thousand years ago.



Since we are looking for a new religion, why not take Vedism which is not to be confused with Brahminism and Buddhism. Brahminism is the same Vedism, corrupted by the priests and Buddhism the same Vedism unbalanced by an inspired man or a mad genius.

Vedism, the most ancient of all known religions, proclaims first that man will not know anything as long as he lives and that God himself does not know what He is.

It is complete agnosticism; and this confession of total and irremediable ignorance on all the essential problems of human life and destiny will be accepted only by an elite which sees beyond ignorance. It could not become the religion of those who believe that a confession of ignorance is a confession of naught.

In the meantime, it is preferable to give to the unknowable (for this is always the essential point in every religious question) a pleasant name and an already familiar face, instead of the hard and frigid appearance of a dead abstraction. That is what all religions did; and up to now, we have to admit it, except for Christianity, their choice was rather unfortunate.

As for the unknowable, our intellectual laziness

advises us not to think of it, since it is understood that we will never know it. This is possible but very unlikely. The word "unknowable" is but a mask, disguising our provisional ignorance. The whole road leading to our future runs from known to unknown and from unknown to unknowable; we cannot find our way to progress and human happiness elsewhere; and only by following it to the end will we become men.



We live in a world where ether is king. In this world does he uninterruptedly accomplish the miracles recently discovered. We do not have the slightest idea about it. We believe it exists because nothing could be explained if it would not. It is invisible, intangible, without taste, without scent, silent and tireless. It is everywhere, impregnates everything, fills everything, remains unvanquished and cannot be captured. It is as if it were the soul of the universe, the presence and substance of God, in the infinity of space and time.

Nothing could be explained if it would not exist; but it is itself as inexplicable as God. Who knows why it seems nearer to us and less frightful? It is still only a naked name and no preju-

dice overburdens it. It can be sheltered in the roadside inn until the great palace of the future is ready for it.

## Notes

And now to the syncopated, everyday notes, tiny bees of an old hive, projecting their shadows on the sundial.



Our death comes into the world together with us, does not ever leave us, watches over us like a mother, who would be Ugolini's sister and bides her time.

Life and death are as inseparable as water.



Why should not we know one day all that nature knows? It is surprising that we have not yet learned it.



Great physicians, great surgeons believe they are cheating death, but do not cheat her anymore

than they cheat fate, which is only one of her names. They cheat only their patients.



“I want to live my own life,” say young girls and young boys; and they live only their death.



Some children do not seem to have a guardian angel. Other children feel it and forsake them.



Cherish all that is beyond you; all that overwhelms you; above all, cherish all that is greater than you.



Before Christ, God could have been excused, for He might not have known what suffering was. But since His Son's martyrdom, He must know what it means.



Even the dead will finally die, unless they never ceased living.



All happiness starts in heaven, continues in purgatory and ends in hell.



As Isocrates used to say, most men revel in other people's suffering more than in their own happiness.



The philosopher Aristypus, one of Socrates' disciples, called happiness "the greatest of gods".



Death is difficult for those who keep her waiting too long.



What do hours, years or even centuries matter in this eternity in which we live without ever thinking of it?



Do you pity the handful of salt thrown into the sea? Far from being lost, it finds itself again.

Do you pity the handful of life thrown into death? It finds itself, too.



Our life in the Great Beyond will start at the highest point we will have reached in our earthly life.



“They are proud of living. They are unbearable, say the dead. . . . As if it would be that difficult to breathe . . . We did not do anything else during all our life. . . .”

They must also say: “Pity those who survive.”  
But do they believe it?



Since the past is always sad, why should not the future be sad too?



Do you ever ask yourself: “How and in what way does God see me?”



Why should the world know where it goes?  
What does knowing where one goes mean?  
Where could it go since it is everywhere?

“Do you know where you are going?”—“Yes, to death.”—“But what is death? It is not an aim, it is not an end.”



We live already in the shadow of future events.



We pity those suffering of cancer. But we all suffer of the same cancer. It is death gnawing at us. And death is incurable.



If God knew what He was doing, he would not do it anymore.



My mother did not die, since I am still alive.



“How old are you?” a pilgrim was asked by a priest.—“Death spared me for fifty years,” was the answer.



We say: "The universe must know everything, since it knows all the causes, being itself the causeless cause of all causes."

Is it enough to be a cause to know what it is, what one is?



The unspeakable horror of finding in others only what one would not like to be. . . .



I never noticed anything miraculous in a life, because everything in it is miraculous.



What would have happened to me, if I were not born?



The folly of men is equaled only by the folly of the Gods they created.



The deadest of all is not the one who is buried.



Do the unborn lie in the cemetery?  
Are there cemeteries in heaven?  
But do not the unborn live forever?



No one has the right to be sceptical before knowing éverything that can be known.



“He will kill you, they tell us, because you are alive and he is dead.”



To die means not to live on this earth anymore; but it does not prove anything, nor does it commit to anything.



Meeting between two dead, keeping an appointment in the Great Beyond. What will they say to each other?



We feel so transitory, so fleeting, that we are interested but in our nonexistence.



“And every island fled away and the mountains were not found,” are we told by the Book of Revelation.



If God would not exist, nothing would be left; and this nothing would at once become everything, that is God.



Death never cheated anyone.



“Nothing is to be feared any more, for he is dead,” they say. Is this that certain?



“Thus will I close my eyes on a world in which my spirit feels like a stranger,” said Villiers de l’Isle-Adam.



Why, if there are demons, and if they are strong enough to oppose Him, did not God destroy them

long ago? What does He use them for? What does He need them for?



Since God gave me freedom of thought, why does He not allow me to think *against* Him, or at least *against* the idea He gave about Him? He should have expected it, since He foresaw it; and does not foreseeing it compel Him to forgive?



I do not recall who said: "I am one of those who cannot forget the quantity of nothingness needed to create the universe."



We might reach one day one point of view in time, from which we shall be able to see our whole life unwinding backwards, beginning with death and ending by birth. But since death, birth and all that happens in between does not matter, nothing would be changed in this or the other world . . .



When we cannot get what we love  
We have to love what we don't have.

Do not plunge yourself in your sorrow!  
Eternity will be in charge.



If God were really as men believe Him to be,  
would He not be ashamed to cause the slightest  
pain to the greatest of human criminals?



Every time death takes one of those we love,  
we cry out in our heart: "You came too soon! . . .  
You were not expected! . . . You came to the  
wrong door! . . . Bring him back to life! . . ."

He never recanted. . . .



He is without pity, we are told.

Why should he have pity, since he is just and  
does not hurt more than sleep?

But where is justice when he kills a newly born  
child?

Do we know what justice is?

We know our justice only, which is only a  
bubble in the infinite.

Would one injustice shatter the universe?



Our astronomers can calculate, according to our time unit, all the movements of all the visible worlds.

What is the importance of measuring time with our units, in an eternity which ignores them?



Villiers de l'Isle-Adam was about to write the last chapter of his "EVE FUTURE," which was dedicated to Edison and which is one of the greatest books of the last century. His furniture had just been foreclosed, and he was left, according to the law, with a bed, a table, a chair and his inkstand. "Oh, my friends," he said to us, meeting us in the Montmartre pub where we were waiting for him. "Oh, my friends, will I remember this planet!" . . .

And we could see eternity behind him . . .



"Consider death from above," they say. I agree. But, in order to consider death from above, we have to live higher than death.



Even in prison, where everything seems to die,  
time does not stop.



The more one knows, the less one understands.  
The more experience, the less initiative.



If all the stars which populate the universe  
were to disappear all of a sudden, the universe  
would still be the universe and we would con-  
tinue our lives beyond the grave or beyond every-  
thing, or before everything.

Our certainty about the universe, about eter-  
nity, about the infinite is our only possible knowl-  
edge, our only defensible consolation. . . .



If our ear were a little bit more sensitive, we  
could hear the song of the dead, deep in the  
ground.



You will be rewarded, you will be punished  
only by *your own God*.



Were you a thousand times more intelligent, God would be a thousand times farther away from you and a thousand times more incomprehensible.



Most men made themselves a pocket God who satisfies them. That is why humanity advances so slowly.

What we call progress is only the refuse of our dreams.

In reality, nothing advances and nothing retreats in the infinity of space and time.



All the Gods created by all religions are only blasphemies and insults to the true God, who expects something else.



Only when we think we do not have God anymore, do we come, at last, closer to divinity.



Why worry about the after-death? It will be life too, since there is nothing else. It will not

be worse than our present life, for, if it were worse, we would not be able to bear it; we would then be driven into a new death, which would still be life and so would it go on and on . . .



Can we imagine a God who would be tired of eternal life and Who could not find rest in a death He would be unable to create?



“My foot touches the edge of the Great Beyond,” said Francois Maynard, the great seventeenth century poet, who deserves to be better known.



Nothing will prevent us from having been, that is, from being still.



We reach the end of life without realizing that we have not started living yet.



When we reach our sixtieth year, most of the friends of our youth are no more. They abandon us at the gate of the great deserts. Those who replace them by chance meeting do not become part of our lives. They remain outsiders. They embrace us at a distance. They look casual and accidental. We learn to live among more or less likable strangers, who do not know us and whom we do not attempt to know. Death is already between us.



What would a God do without any human beings? Just what a human being would do without a God.

But it is easy to admit the non-existence of man. Certain animals would advantageously replace him. But God's non-existence is unconceivable.



One might say that God sells death. But only too often does He sell it for too high a price.



Let us sum up the errors, the folly, the stupidity of our past. I am unable to remember any that

would have been important enough to deviate or change the course of my existence, be it even for a moment.

The wrong I decided to do, I never did. Neither the good, as far as that is concerned.

The same would apply to my sins.

Do foolishness and sins grow old and stale? "Do birds hide when death closes on them" the Good François Coppée wanted to know? When death approaches, do foolishness and errors hide like birds at the approach of winter?



All the happiness of life lies in our memories. We never enjoy the hour which belongs to us. Happiness begins once it has gone.



God did not find anything above death.

I despise man because I feel that he is like me; and I despise him less because I feel that I am like him.



One duty only: fight stupidity and bestiality.

But was ever collective stupidity and bestiality defeated? History proves that this is not possible: We should not despair.

I think I know that which can be learned; but I do not understand anything anymore. When I was young, I did not know anything but I thought that I understood everything.



Life would not have taught me anything if it had not taught me to smile at the memory of that which hurt me most.



If man had not always been the summit of the universe, we would have known it, we are told. Is that quite certain?

Was everything always incommunicable from world to world? Are there any indications to prove it? Some might still be found, otherwise it would be a heartbreaking enigma.

But if there should be another summit, would we have more understanding of it than for the spirit of the universe?

We would only understand it if it were to

shrink to our size. All that is beyond us, all that surpasses us has, to this day, escaped us.



How do we prove that there is anything on the other side of life, for there is nothing on this side of it.



The more one thinks of death, the better one knows life.



Dead, we will continue to be what we are, and in the eternal happiness and sorrow it will be wretched and of little significance; or we shall be something different and shall not be ourselves anymore. In that case, what does either matter?



To die is not to know anymore that one lives.



We do not have any other future than death. It is our native land.



We do not hold within us as yet the same conception of men of genius still alive that we will hold once they are dead.

A living author is not read like a dead one.

A great author in his grave is more alive than he ever was in his room.



We should not forget all those who lived without expressing themselves. They may have possessed part of the secret we are still seeking.



We are only what our thought is; but where does our thought come from?



Time dies, while eternity lives on.



God created man in his image, so the Genesis tells us; and unable to do any better, we create God in ours. . . .

I cannot worship that God. It is the God of a vicious circle.



The uncreated is the only admissible hypothesis. Why should it be more difficult to explain than the others?



Why should we be endowed with intelligence only to be plunged into the incomprehensible?



The angels of the Sacred Books, those of Eden, of Sodom, of Tobias, of the Annunciation and of the Resurrection, etc., spoke like human beings, and did not say anything that was not human. Would not men have understood them if they had spoken like angels? Would it have been impossible to translate into our language the angelic things they had to tell us? Did not Jehovah speak the Hebrew of Adam, Moses and the prophets? Why did they not do like the God who sent them? Did they not have anything to tell us about another world and another planet? What a concerted and disconcerting silence.



God wants men to reach higher. Why did He not create him at the height He likes? What is the

use of these struggles, these efforts, these strivings, in which He lends a helping hand and the outcome of which is known to Him before they even start.



Where were we before our birth? Where we will probably go after our death. We forgot what preceded our arrival on this earth, as we shall forget what preceded our arrival beneath it. Our life will have only been the interlude between these two moments of forgetfulness. Why ask any more questions?



Imperfect as we are, we have been in God always. Why keep us there imperfect? Did we have to leave to become more imperfect, like the damned or more perfect, like the saints? But did God not know in what state and for what future we were leaving Him. Why this test?



Does God not feel the burden of imperfection He carries within Him?



If I had been God, I would have created Gods only.



The faithful say: “What is the use of all these questions?”

Do they live only to keep their eyes closed?



What would the universe be if chance had not favored it? Would it still be as we see it? Or would it not even exist? Is this possible? But what would be in its place?

— Let us dream about it before falling into the eternal sleep.

Unless an answer should come, I do not know where from. Perhaps man is just beginning to prepare to understand it, or to intercept it.



Will the last survivors be able to advise us retroactively of all they might have found out? They might discover that we are not dead and might bring us back to life? Isn't that the last hope of those who arrive too early in too young

a world? Would not that be the compensation for great injustices?



Why should the spirit be more immortal than the body? Isn't everything immortal?



When, after the disintegration of the atom, we will still not know anything, we shall perhaps understand that the word *to know* does not exist in the universe.



We should not ever speak of God. To speak of Him is to stir images which do not represent Him. It is by praising Him that we really commit blasphemy. A silence free of thoughts is alone worthy of Him.



We all have around us, above us, or within us an invisible friend. Blessed are those who learned how to listen to him.



After a certain while, the most painful memory becomes dull and sometimes even pleasant.



If the God to whom I have to account for my deeds is reasonable, He will absolve me. If He is not, I will be the one to forgive Him.

There are too many dead in us to enable us to lead a happy life.



What would the man be who could free himself from his dead?



What would a God be who would know everything? What is there to be known? Everything. But what is Everything?



If existence is an unfathomable mystery, non-existence—were such a thing possible—would be still more unfathomable. Why worry? We should look on, accept, without ever losing sight of the

inner meaning of the mystery which magnifies everything.



Let us never forget that we are citizens of a tremendous enigma.



Let our ignorance be a constructive one.



Incomprehensible errors of nature in a universe where everything is predetermined.



Eternity is the space of the spirit, just as space is the eternity of the body.



If someone suddenly should see everything: the infinite and eternity, the causes and effects, the past and the future, the beginning and the end, would he then understand anything?



What we call understanding is the beginning of knowing that we do not know.—



Move to another planet? What for? It would be just like moving into another room.



Even my own mother does not return to tell me of her abode in the Great Beyond. Who is stopping her from so doing? It must be impossible. Does she now exist only within me? Does she not know where she lives anymore? Does that prove that all vanishes? Who would believe it, even though it be impossible?

What we call naught exists only in relation to us, which does not mean it exists.



You say: "I would rather not be." You do not have the choice.



The ghastliest nightmare is but a discomfort which is healed by awakening in the twinkling of an eye. In the same way, the most distressing

agony will be healed in a twinkling of an eye by awakening in death.



If God should not exist we would find a Substitute-God. But if the universe should cease to exist we would not find anything.



In a thousand years, in ten thousand years there will be another God. Let us imagine what He will be like. He is about to take shape and emerge out of the shadow. He will be what men will be in future centuries, until there will be no more men and therefore no more Gods.



Man is already, this very day, within God, such as he was and such as he shall be throughout the unending flow of centuries.

Why all these successions, since everything exists in this one moment?

Why should he not be able to discover now what he is to become, since he already is what he is to become? Is that reasonably impossible?



By continuously strolling through the unknown, the future, and through mystery, we might end up by finding someone or something.



Did not so many superior minds, so many wise dead in the centuries preceding us, give any good advice to God?



On the immortal scale, what I shall do weighs as much as what I am doing and what I have been doing.



Most men live in the future. They are right. There, they are happier than in the past or the present. There, happiness is easily attained and its price is almost naught.



Man is a soap-bubble. The bubble has beautifully colored reflections and the shape of heavenly bodies. It floats peacefully in space. It seems happy. Then, it bursts. The air it contained mixes

with the air around it and the thin film which was enclosing it, evaporates into the same air. Nothing is lost, since nothing can be lost; and the memory of the beautiful colors lingers for one fleeting moment in the eyes that have perceived them.



To be or not to be is the same thing. You would say: "I might not have been." Not at all, you *were* and did not have any choice. That which is not and shall not be is the reverse of that which is and which shall be.



If I were not born, would not everything I have done have been done? There are no vacuums in eternity and in the infinite. Nothing is ever missing.



When a man reaches the threshold of the eighties, he looks back on his image at the age of twenty and asks himself: "Am I still the same man?" Why should we be the same man? Which of us shall be punished or rewarded? Which one will care about the other's fate?

Still, I remember that at twenty I somehow felt the desire of thinking and saying what I now think and say. But their shadows only surround me.



“In Egypt,” says Bossuet, “everything was God, except God himself.” Were not the Egyptians right and was not theirs a broader view than that of the great orator who confined his God to the petty images of the Old and New Testament?



The fear of death is the only source of all religions.



If death did not exist, man would be God.

On the other hand, it is certain that death as the end of everything or the complete annihilation, is inconceivable.

If death is not annihilation, call it sleep, crossing, transformation, transfiguration, etc., and humanity will be freed of the great burden that crushes it.

The end of life would be much less frightening if it were not to be called death anymore.



Why are animals afraid of death? Is it because they know what it is? Who told it to them?

And the insects which pretend to be dead when they are about to be caught? How do they know that death makes the enemy helpless? Does the mystery of death penetrate all that is alive?



“Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” says Saint Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

Are these really Saint Paul’s words? And not those of a XVIth century heretic or a modern poet?

“We shall judge angels,” what does that mean? Can an Angel fail? What was the sin of Angels? We are told it was pride. Did they have others? One would like to ask them, but since the first day of resurrection they no longer speak.



Are not the sins of angels more beautiful than our virtues?

And would not a pride which destroyed the greatest among them, by rising so high in an intelligence and a consciousness which knew God better than we do, become heroic?



Those who speak to me seriously of their future make me smile . . . Is not their future in the grave? . . .



I remember the madman who heard time slipping and passing by before him. In what form? He refused to tell me. He also heard voices of children coming out of the future.



“I already live in a world where two and two might not be four,” said Villiers de l’Isle-Adam.



We should never forget that we are made of the same matter as stars.



Our fictions advance only by slight pushes to reality; which in the end leads to the distortion of all lives.



I have always existed and will always exist. Why should a few years spent on a short-lived earth cut my eternity in two, one which stepped into unconsciousness and the other which will alight in flames never to be extinguished?



If I were God, I would reserve a particularly unpleasant corner for those who attributed to me the abominable and sadistic folly of hell.

On the other hand, I would prepare a moderately pleasant corner of my Purgatory for the exclusive use of the engineers of prayers, the beadsayers, the sayers of litanies, mass, jaculatory orations, psalms, etc., slow fire for the gullible, quick fire for the cunning. They would enter Heaven only in a state of complete carbonization.



Air is only a material form of ether.



To be born or to die before one's time? It would be an impossible and insane perturbation which would dislocate the universe.



There was not any *Fiat* as there was not any *factum est*. Everything has and shall always happen in an eternal silence.



At the last Judgment, God will only be able to damn and torture our bones. But, according to our Catechism, He will bring us back to life "in our own flesh." What would you think of this God who would bring us back to life only to inflict abominable and eternal tortures upon us? What brain drunk with rancour, hatred and envy could conceive such a horrible dream?



Only by becoming a God, can we see God.



If the spirit of evil would exist, nothing else would.



A child goes to school on Monday and brings back the germ of a contagious disease of which he dies at the end of the week. This is the end of an existence. If he had not gone to school on Monday, he would not have died. What does that prove? That there is no plan in the march of events? That there is no plan between cause and effect? But it was undeniably predetermined since everything is predetermined. Why? Useless to ponder on it. Nothing has been discovered until now. This is the situation, the image of all destinies.

Could one say that, since it was predetermined, it was not an accident? That would imply ill will somewhere. Should not we try to appease it? That has always been done, that is what all religions still do, the most primitive ones, as well as the most civilised and the most scholarly.

To understand would be to understand God's intentions. But what God? Aye, there's the rub. The one we can conceive in our deepest understanding could have no plans or intentions, for, having any, would mean having an aim and was He not all aims, since the beginning of Time?



If the world could become perfect, it would be reunited with God, for it left God in appearance only. This would mean the end of our human delusion, but not the end of our existence.



The present, like God, does not yet have a face.



Our planet begins to throw up certain peoples. It is about time.



We die when we are born, for we exchange an eternal and universal life for a fleeting and individual death. Is it anything else but a gamble?

It is true that once we die, we reenter eternity.



What prevents the dead from speaking? Perhaps they have nothing to say.

This would be the ideal, since one cannot conceive what eternal celebrations or tortures would be.



Everything happens as it was pre-ordained. But why was it pre-ordained? Was it worth pre-ordaining the most insignificant details of our lives? And by whom were they pre-ordained?



Let's suppose that a hidden recorder would register your most secret thoughts of the day, and that, towards night-fall, a powerful megaphone were to proclaim them on the public place; would you be ashamed or would you be satisfied?

That would be the best and the most practical way of testing one's conscience.



We ask ourselves with amazement where this frantic life of billions and billions of atoms, in animals, in plants, in stars, in rocks and in everything that exists comes from. If everything should be dead, would it be easier to answer the question where this death comes from? Why should death be more acceptable, more likely, more marvellous than life? There is no other solution, indeed; it is either or; or rather, it is the same thing since both of them are life.



Until now, God was only a bubble in the imagination of a primitive man.



Angels are wherever we are. They live the lives of others in order to avoid or to forget their own.



We are told that those who are converted in their last days or their last hours offer only miserable wrecks to God. It is true; but we should not forget that He is the sole cause of those wrecks and that He is offered only what He caused us to be . . .



In his "les Amours de Psyché," good old La Fontaine tells about a castle where, "by a prophetic magic, that which was not yet, met that which would never be."

Is his description not prophetic?



The God of Israel was judged by His own angels, since they rebelled.



When we wind our watch, do we create time or do we feed the hour of death?



“All the steps I made were futile,” said an unfortunate man. He was wrong. There are no futile steps, since they all bring us closer to death.



Experience does not teach anything to God, since He always knows everything. Little by little, it teaches us all that we know. But does nature, which seems to be between man and God, learn anything? Do we not have the impression that it does?



The great step, the last one: to be reconciled with the incomprehensible. Why should we part with it? Why leave it? To go where? If we under-

stood everything, we ourselves would become incomprehensible.



If God did not forgive us, He would be less intelligent than we are. And if He were less intelligent than we are, He would not be God.



If rest can be eternal, why should unconsciousness be eternal too? I asked myself in "Before God."

For, if unconsciousness were not eternal, rest would not ever be eternal, I would answer today.



The day when we know what God is, we will be God. That is why we will never know it, for God himself does not know it, or He would be dethroned by the one who knows what He is.



We do not have to start life all over again; it never ended.



Having awakened the naught, God cannot put it to sleep again. For this matter, if naught had not existed, there would be no God.



If the universe were not eternal, how would it come to an end? Its end would be the universe still, just as the end of Time would be useless, since it would still be eternity.



By revealing to us the character and the psychology of their God, the prophets of the Old Testament taught us above all to create a God who would be all that their God should not have been.



If man has deceived the God of Israel, the God of Israel deceives the man of our days as much.



Great difference: the living in which the dead still live and the living in which the dead are definitively dead.



All our dead live within us but as they were before their death. Since they passed from life to death, they are not within us anymore, but live elsewhere, we do not know where and they do not communicate with us anymore. That is why they can only tell us what they knew before their death.



“God is so infinitely great,” said François de Curel, “that leaving Him often means coming closer to Him.”



The disadvantage of heaven is that there is no more hope. There will always be some left in hell because there we will suffer.



One has to believe more than one's faith.



The only sin against the spirit is to take God for an imbecile. Is not that what all so-called revealed religions do?



Should not the newly born children plunge us in the same terror as the dead who leave us? Why are we afraid of the dead? Because one day we will die like they do, and because we do not know where they are going, where they are; in spite of the fact that religions offer us information on their fate, which inspire in us very little confidence indeed.



Won't we succeed one day in resuscitating and reincarnating our memories?



The *eternal NO*, Carlyle's *everlasting NO* does not exist, never existed and shall never exist.



The one who does not believe, waits for a God. infinitely greater, infinitely better and infinitely more powerful than the one who believes or thinks he believes.



The unconscious and the subconscious are forgotten memories.



An unwarranted suffering discredits the universe and destroys all faith and all confidence.



Does the next world die too?

There is no other world, since we live in it.

We should never forget that we will soon be but a memory. That is all that will be left. All that we can hope for.



My heart was there,  
But it was still here,  
My heart was here,  
But it was still there. . . .

It has to die here  
To come to life again there,  
There, in the Great Beyond,  
But there we're dying too . . .

It lives in the other world  
But then it dies there too . . .  
It died in the other world  
Without living in this one . . .



One day we will know all that is known to the demon of the earth. But does his genius reach beyond the boundaries of this earth? It would already mean a great deal. Will this genius permit us to escape, to defeat death? But did he defeat it?



Imagine a prophet who would never be wrong and who would be listened to. There would be no more unhappiness on this earth.



To learn to precede our future.



“I am discouraged at lasting so long,” said Chateaubriand, at the end of his “Memories d’Outre-Tombe.” He was but eighty years old.



Paradise will be for those who say: “I did not know, I never knew . . .”

The only possible attitude: “I wait for you to speak to me.”

The only possible moral: "I do not do what I forbid myself to do."



What if the torments should last long, since there will be not time.



"It is not possible for thought to know anything greater than itself," said William Blake the great dreamer.

That is why we should move the boundaries of our thoughts still farther.



Is the universe looking for its conscience? But what might the consciousness of the universe or of God be? By becoming conscious, they would limit themselves and by limiting themselves, they would cease to exist. Becoming conscious means looking for and finding one's limitations. The universe does not have any, nor do we.



Before my birth, I was. After my death I shall be. What is the difference?

Is it reasonable to say that the only moment where *I am* is between my birth and my death?

I was before being. I am after having been; or rather, I never started, nor ceased being.



The wisest man is the one who sees farthest in his ignorance.

# Lazarus and Magdalen

*(Magdalen meets Lazarus in front of the house  
of Simon-the-Leprous)*

MAGDALEN

Lazarus, were you dead?

LAZARUS

That is what people say . . .

MAGDALEN

When will you die anew?

LAZARUS

Before you . . .

MAGDALEN

Why?

LAZARUS

Because you are younger.

MAGDALEN

Is that all you know?

LAZARUS

Yes.

MAGDALEN

Then you are a man just like the others.

LAZARUS

And why not?

MAGDALEN

Are you afraid of descending again?

LAZARUS

One does not descend.

MAGDALEN

What does one do?

LAZARUS

Nothing.

MAGDALEN

Why did you die?

LAZARUS

I was not told.

MAGDALEN

You did not learn anything?

LAZARUS

Only what everybody will learn . . .

MAGDALEN

What do the dead do?

LAZARUS

Nothing.

MAGDALEN

Where can they be found?

LAZARUS

They cannot be found.

MAGDALEN

What did they tell you?

LAZARUS

That they are not dead.

MAGDALEN

But you, what were you doing?

LAZARUS

I was sleeping . . .

MAGDALEN

One does not sleep when one is dead . . .

LAZARUS

What do you expect them to do?

MAGDALEN

If you did not learn anything, it was not worth while dying.

LAZARUS

One does not suffer.

MAGDALEN

You did not see anything?

LAZARUS

What do you see when you sleep?

MAGDALEN

Were you happy or unhappy?

LAZARUS

I did not know what I was.

MAGDALEN

Did you meet Him?

LAZARUS

Whom?

MAGDALEN

The One who brought you back to life.

LAZARUS

He had not died yet . . .

MAGDALEN

Are you glad to be alive again?

LAZARUS

I do not know yet . . .

MAGDALEN

Are you afraid of returning there?

LAZARUS

I did not know that I was there . . .

MAGDALEN

Does one see God there?

LAZARUS

As you see Him . . .

LAZARUS

You will learn . . .

MAGDALEN

I do not dare look at you . . .

LAZARUS

Why?

MAGDALEN

Because you were dead . . .

LAZARUS

You will die too . . .

MAGDALEN

It is not the same thing . . .

LAZARUS

Why?

MAGDALEN

What can one do?

LAZARUS

Wait . . .

## Notes

What did Jesus write on the ground with his finger in the presence of the woman taken in adultery?

Not "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

That He *said*, but the Evangelist does not tell us what He *wrote*.



Man's natural state is death. The man who is alive is as dead as the one who is to die in a moment.



Since we do not know how and when we began, how do you expect us to know how and when we will end?



The first duty of all wisdom: to disentangle oneself of all preconceived idea of the Great Beyond, of all imaginary immortality.



It looks as if the God of the New Testament created the poor for the sole pleasure of damning the rich. For, after all, if the poor are poor and the rich are rich, it is because He wanted it so.



All that happens and all that happened since the beginning of Time was according to someone's wish. Why? Until when will we try to understand His psychology?

Is not the best we can do on the last summit the best we can do?



In a few months, in a few days, in a few hours, today or tomorrow, little does it matter, but I would rather know now what has been decided since the beginning of Time.



Know what? I would not even know that I do not know.



What does it matter to know the hour when I shall die, since I am already dead, and, if there be any judgment, already judged.



We do not understand anything of what exists. But if there should be nothing, we would understand even less, and, in any case we would not exist and there would be nothing to understand.

Would that be preferable? Why not?



The spermatozoon of the elephant or of the hippopotamus is not larger than that of the Guinea pig or of the mouse. This is the great secret of the invisible worlds.



Germany, a strange people which comes into the world, lives and dies as a slave in the deceptive hope of becoming the master of naught.



Let us suppose that no religion ever existed, that man was never pre-occupied by the thought of God and never pronounced any of His names. The human being provided with all that modern science would have taught him, coming into this world with this tabula rasa, what would he think, what would he say about God?

But would he have the idea of thinking of Him at all? And should he think of Him, should he talk of Him, how would he imagine Him? How would he call Him?

That is what we ought to do.



Why not prefer an eternal unconsciousness, that we wrongly call naught, to an uncertain heaven and an eternal but precarious and unattainable happiness.

Anyhow, the choice is not for us to make.



I do not have the confidence of the gods; but their secrets are usually known by everybody, or like the fire brigade which arrives after the fire.



Let us study for a moment the unbelievable complication of the digestive system of animals, always founded on the same chemical, physical, mechanical, electrical principles and adapted to their type of life. Who has devised all this? Not the animal, which does not know anything, does not learn anything, does not improve anything, but an Intelligence which knew many a thing we do not know, many a thing we strive so desperately to know and which we will probably never know. The faithful call it God. But what a strange God. If He really is endowed with the genius that we must admit He possesses, could He not have accomplished something else? I do not quite know what kind of more perfect, less fragile, less complicated thing, less subject to innumerable sufferings?

Let us take as an example our metallic animals, with almost everlasting parts, in any case replaceable or interchangeable, etc. Could he not have started out from similar principles to engineer our existences? He could not have ignored them, since we could only find them because they already existed within him.



The frightful events and dramas that come to pass during our wars do not give us a deeper insight into destiny, into the intentions of Providence, the intelligence of the universe, the mysteries of the Great Beyond and of Justice than the stupid ups and downs of a game of dice in the back-room of a liquor store.



The eternity of sorrows and joys? Which was the first religion to mention them? Evidently, it did not realize what it was thinking of. For this religion, Eternity meant a very long time, just as to the native of Polynesia, infinite numbers are all those he cannot count on his ten fingers.



Where, when and how will I die? Is this not what everyman should ask himself in order not to err?



The inevitable hurls itself at me. What should I think? Nothing. What should I say? Nothing. What should I do? That remains to be seen.



If the damned be intelligent, he will soon find out that he has been in hell since the beginning of time, since eternity, whatever it be, can have neither beginning nor end.



If, right after my death I were able to live on earth again, just as I had lived before, what would be the first thing I would do?



Fate and destiny are only more human pseudonyms we give to an irrevocable predestination.



A dreadful nightmare of Charlotte Brontë. She dreams that she sees her two dead sisters alive again, in the family drawing room. They had forgotten what they were before their death. They did not recognize their sister. They were not the same . . .

Is this not the nightmare we would all have, if we were to remain alive?



We live more often with our ghosts than with the living who surround us.



Imagination is the memory of the future.



“I do not think that God knows so much about himself. God does not *know* things, He *is* all things,” said D. H. Lawrence very wisely.

Knowing when one is everything, is but a human accessory.



Because we see people constantly dying around us, we think we know what death is. But no one ever knows it. Even Lazarus, should his story be true, and had he really been brought to life again, would he have known what it was?



Do not forget, that in space and in time, your reflection in a mirror is as eternal, as unvarying as a mountain of pure diamonds.



I do not remember who said that in a glass filled to the brim, a rose petal can always float, and that on this petal of flower, ten thousand angels can pray.



The demon wins out. The reign of the angel will come back; but it will not be the same angel.



The aim of every civilization is to make man forget he is man. As soon as he becomes conscious of it, he is unhappy.



In an insane asylum, the physician in charge is the only madman, from the point of view of the patients.



According to Saint Augustine and according to reason, God knowing everything past and future, we are damned or saved before being born. If that be so, what is the use of fighting?



Prayer is useless, say the chosen. We must be happy, and they cannot be anything but happy.



Let us imagine a deceased conversation with our neighbor at a posthumous table. I often have this impression at banquets at which I am compelled to assist, to my great annoyance.

When shall we learn how to be silent?

—Not before we are dead.



Why strive for a happiness other than that enjoyed by the drop of water in the ocean?



I feel at home in my native land only when I reach the innermost depth of my thought.



Happiness is but a matter of opinion.



The God of Israel, the God "I Am," as He calls himself, appears generally like a dyspeptic schoolmaster or as an irritable and vindictive foreman.



It we should enter what is called non-existence, by the very fact of our entering, it would not be non-existence anymore.



We cannot think without words. Therein lies the great obstacle that hinders everything.



Why should God be more easily explained and more easily understood than the universe?



Believing that there are things that do not exist is but a weakness of our mind. What we do not see, what we cannot conceive, exists just as much as the things we can imagine, since everything exists. There is no place in the universe for things that do not exist. Nonexistence would be synonymous with nil, which is inconceivable.



If God should have created happier or unhappier worlds than ours, He would have committed an unbelievable injustice.

He could therefore not have done anything better or worse than what He did on our earth.



If the world has been created, it has been made out of a vacuum or of nothing. But in order to create something out of vacuum or of nothing, this vacuum or nothing had to exist, and therefore it was not vacuum.



If we admit that the world has been created, we create two unknowns instead of one, for we add to the enigma of creation, the enigma of God himself, who is of necessity uncreated.



Since, created or uncreated, the universe exists, someone, intelligence, consciousness or something similar must of necessity know what it is.

Will this someone never speak? Various religions claim He has done so already. But whatever He said up to this day, did not bring us any knowledge.



Does the demon of the Christians know in advance whether the one he tempts will resist or succumb? If he does not know it, he is as blind as we are.



The Dinosaur, the most gigantic of antediluvian animals (height: 88 feet; length: 100 feet) had a brain which did not weigh more than a few ounces, in a body weighing over a ton.

Man has a brain weighing three pounds, including one pound of grey matter, for a body of 160 pounds.

But the Dinosaur had a second brain between his hips. It was the nervous center controlling the enormous paws and the balancing of the heavy long tail.



Explain everything through God. Very well. But God has to be explained and everything starts all over again, and we are as far from the end as we ever were, for God is the summit of the inexplicable.



We more or less imagine the infinity of space by ceasing to see. How should we imagine the infinity of time? Once it becomes infinite, it ceases to be time and becomes eternity.



Four dice in a leather box; shake the box. That is all one has to do to summon destiny and question it. Throw the dice on the table: 6.3.5.2. There is your answer. The moment that these dice were to fall was determined for an eternity. It is a memorable and indelible moment of this eternity. May those who are able, understand it. These are the undisputable facts. Is it not the reflection or the equivalent of all that happened in our life?



My memories, all I say, heard, felt will continue to live for centuries after my death, in space and in time, like the rays of the nebula, which take millions of years to reach the earth.

Am I really dead, since my memories, which were the essence of myself, go on living?



Happiness is within us. Yes, provided we placed it there. It does not get there by itself.



Night devours our life, like a starved she-wolf, in a few bites, and, from the corner of its eye, death watches it with satisfaction.



If death were to teach us what life is, would it teach us what death is too?



Lazarus always carries within him and drags behind him the thick shadow of the grave.



“We are going to cause death,” they say departing for the wars.

And what else do other people do, who create life?



And in eternity, they already worry, how are we going to spend our time?



If the secret of the world could be revealed, it would be as great as the world, and we would not be able to bear it.



All moral and theological truths had already been revealed by men before the arrival of Christ. (I think of Vedism, Buddhism, of the Greek philosophers and of the Stoics of Rome.) One is justified in wondering whether it was indispensable for a God to descend on earth and to be put to death by atrocious tortures, in order to teach humanity what it already knew.



One thinks of the dead with whom one used to go to the cafes . . . What became of them? Are they as stupid as they used to be? What are they doing in this other life where there are no cafes?



The God I adore is the God who does not yet exist.

As soon as I shall believe I know Him, I shall not believe in Him anymore.



Whatever they have been in their lives, they will still be in their death.



If death were not eternal life, it would be naught; and naught could only exist if it did not exist.



Am I ever with others as I would be with myself, if I were to meet myself in life?

But how am I with myself?

The great artist, Delacroix, cried out: "I have two, three, four friends, and with each of them I am compelled to be another man; or rather show to each of them an aspect he understands; it is a wretched thing to be forever known and felt in certain aspects only by the same man: and when I think of it, I believe it is life's supreme sorrow."



God is not creative, He is creation.



What was earth before our birth?  
—What it will be once we are gone.



By an error of nature, cancer might be intended to defend us against an illness more horrible than leprosy and still unknown to us.



If there should be nothing after death, we shall not have the means of finding out; and the millions of men who died since the beginning of Time will not rise from their graves to revolt, because they lived and died without knowing why. Would they have more reason to complain than the billions of dogs, monkeys and fleas which made a fleeting appearance on earth without being told what it is all about?



Not to believe in God, is not to believe in oneself.



The quest of God is but a spiritual form of universal gravity.



“And for how long can we delay the trip?”  
(Jean de la Fontaine. *La mort et le mourant.*)



The day we believe we have found God, we will be very surprised to find that we see ourselves at last.



When will we have radio contact with the dead?

Unless there be no dead . . .

Unless it be what mediums are doing.



Lately and for the first time in my life, I saw a dead man in my dreams. But although he was dead, his feet were moving.

Is this another proof that the subconscious does not admit, does not understand death?



Sometimes, the outcome of a thought proves to be the opposite of what we were hoping for. We set out searching for *Yes*, and we meet *No* instead. We have to admit it. We have to admit everything.



Would someone who neither saw nor heard about death be aware of it?



But, some might object, what could a voice which ceased to be human tell you?

Would I know, I would speak in its name. A few words, no matter what they be, will not settle the matter.

—It is possible, but I cannot help that behind all this, there is something as yet we completely ignore.

You might answer that half a century ago we did not have any idea about telegraphs, radio, cosmic rays, and the marvels of atoms, etc. It is true, but there must be something else.



Someone dies: one less alive, one more dead. Nothing is lost, nothing is gained. All losses are compensated, nothing changed. Two words have changed places, that is all.



But give to those two words their secret, their true meaning. All changes. Instead of rotting, we bloom. Who would still believe in death, who would be afraid of it?

Indeed, we always end by blossoming somewhere, but too late for us to find consolation in

this blossoming, because we are the obedient slaves of time.



If there should not be anything after death, what is the significance of this ghastly joke which would have shown us the universe for a minute, obliterating our vision, the very moment we had it?



It is more important to justify than to explain.



As nothing has an aim, everything is useless. But an aim would be outside the realm of the infinite, and consequently there would be no infinite left; and if there were no infinite, there would be no God.



The visible aim of life is death. But that which dies does not cease living.



Why should there be an aim? What is an aim? To become other than we are? But this other thing

would have an aim too, otherwise it would be similar to what we are, and so on ad infinitum.



Excellent theologians tried to answer my questions, to resolve my problems. They did not give me any plausible answer.



An accident without an aim, in a world without an aim? Why not? I am as much in favor of this as of anything which might not be as great.



Words, just words, without any meaning in reality, you will object. All words apply to unknown realities. "Word, words," one used to say to Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. "What else are you using in questioning me? What else would you like me to answer you with?" he replied.



To each his own God. Will he have a gallery of divine caricatures? As many gods as men? The photo-created God or the general God? Is He better or worse looking than man? We will have

the God of saints, of the rich and the poor, of worker and peasant, of lawyer and physician, of the miser and the prodigal, of the scholar and the illiterate, etc.

In vain have we tried to make Him of a superior essence. Each of us has modified this essence to fit his own likeness.

To improve little by little the standard type? This is our only mission, our only hope.



Why should God create beings equal to himself? These equals would have been Himself. Even if they would have multiplied, they would have still remained one. The only thing which is impossible for Him, is to cease being One. All that He would create around Him, would still be Him.



The day when we believe we can prove that God does not exist, we shall be closer to the true God than at any other moment of our life.



“The history of mankind is the history of purification of the idea of God,” so wisely said Edmond Jaloux.



Thinking of the dead is making them almost immortal.



Forgive all, for all vanishes.



Learn to enjoy a lingering hour.



The ill-bred dead alone bother the living.



Is it forgetfulness which seeks memory or memory which seeks forgetfulness?

Future is somewhere already past.



In the eternal present which is the only reality of time, one can easily see oneself dying before being born.



Everything is in nothing and nothing is in everything, as the statue in its mould exists simultaneously in its negative and in its positive form.



What happens to me is of little importance since all that happens to me was already before I was even born.



If only we could change one single thing in our destiny, we would all be happy.



Destiny is the unfathomable mystery. Why was everything that happens established and predetermined once and for all, for all eternity?

It is, however, exactly the same mystery as the mystery of God.



Everything is. Did anyone make it? If so, who made that someone?

If we imagine God as the most intelligent of men (and we could not imagine Him in a more flattering way) everything He created would be

perfect and happy. If He did not do so, it is because His intelligence is different from ours, and, obviously, ours is wrong. Therefore, what is the use of reasoning, logic and hypothesis? We do not have anything in common with the universe.



The giant of the skies is a star of the 9th power, in the cloud of Magellan, star called S. Doradus, the luminosity of which is 316,000 times that of our sun. If this star should replace our sun, the luminosity of our day would be as the light of noon, compared with that of the full moon.



### INCINERATION ROUND

We would not have any dead  
If they did not have graves . . .  
All the world's sorrows  
Come from their graves . . .  
If they did not have graves  
They would still be smiling . . .  
We would not have any dead . . .



Peter and Paul have the same friends. Peter sees only their shortcomings, their vices, their ugliness. Paul sees only their qualities, their virtues, their beauty. What will be the consequences of these contradictory views on the happiness or unhappiness of the one and the other?

I leave to one more skillful and patient than I the task and the pleasure of studying and developing these possibilities.



If one of the worlds which exist in space had reached its zenith, that is for what we hope, it seems incredible that it could not have been able to inform us of it. Such a world would be almost equal to God; and since material obstacles could not exist anymore for it, it would be morally compelled to lead us on the road to the same happiness.



Health is the waiting-room of illness and destiny.



Did Adam coming out of God's hands know what he was? And if God were to reveal to us

what we are, could we understand? Would He be able to explain to us for what purpose we came to this earth?



Hardly would we start knowing what we are, that we would already be something else, and we would have to start all over again.



The most discouraging thing is that there probably is nothing to know, nothing to understand, or at least nothing that resembles that which we call to know and to understand. . . .



We sometimes have the impression of never having been what we are, of never having been ourselves.

Where are we looking for ourselves, where are we finding ourselves in life? At what moment were we really ourselves? At what moment would we have liked to stop, to relax? Does anyone have his supreme moment?



Some of the dead we meet think they are still alive! . . . Instead of asking them "How are you?" we should ask them: "What is going on in your grave and how is your luxury coffin behaving?"

Every man is more or less dead.



Man becomes what he thinks.



The coming and going of always becoming. . . .



"That which is dead does not fall out of the universe," said Marcus Aurelius. If nothing can fall out of the universe, our life cannot fall either and we shall always live.

However, we do die, you will say.

Do we have any way of knowing?



Every time we lose courage, we lose several days of our life.



We should be able to recreate ourselves at every moment. Some day we may succeed.

We use the expressions: *recreation, to relax.* But what is the meaning we give them? Will a few letters change the meaning?



Were we to live a thousand years, we would not dare die anymore.



*“Ignis Natura Renovatur Integra,”* say the Rosicrucians.



Since it came into being, that is since the beginning of Time, matter has not changed. The stars which come into being, live and seem to die, are made out of the same matter.

Has the spirit changed?



We say: the genius of nature, the genius of the universe, of the species or of life. You say: the genius of God; and the mystery remains the same. We are thus in complete agreement on the total nothingness of ignorance covered by words which do not mean anything.



“Prophecy would annihilate human freedom,” said Kant. But freedom, in the manner we conceive it, does not exist. Are you free to be or not to be?



I shall know everything when I am no more, but I shall not know that I know it. Therefore, why know it at all?



If the great judge should tell me: “Did you have mercy on the wretched around you?” I shall answer: “Did you have mercy on the wretched you created?”



We live in the future as much as in the present or the past. Why do we not see it?



We end by being as wicked as those we slander. We take on their color and their smell.



Imagine an island or a continent where everyone was as beautiful, as kind as Christ.

Unfortunately, our imagination will never be able to conceive that which might happen, that is, how indispensable hatred, envy, lies, selfishness and wickedness are to our life.



Is it possible that God might not want everything He allows to happen?



We instinctively ask ourselves if other worlds, other planets similar to ours exist. Why not? Everything is possible in the infinity of probabilities which exist in the infinity of times and space. But, it must be added that if one such world exists, billions of billions must necessarily exist. For the same law of the infinity of probabilities in the infinity of Time or space rules here as it does elsewhere. The infinity of possible combinations is as unlimited as the infinity of the universe.



Man and his dead, man and his demons, man and his angels?

He has his dead; he is his demons. But what about his angels? Does he have any?

And if he does, do they know his future?  
He alone knows it, but they can read it in him.



God is in perpetual motion, although He does not move in space and in time, since He dwells in them and fills them completely.



A God who could have been wrong could never have been God.



The great catch of all human happiness: spending the hours without feeling them go by, as if each passing hour were gained by life, when it is only won by death.



To wake up older, to be able to live only by forgetting life, therein lies all human happiness.



They sleep their lives away waiting for meal-time. They live only in order not to live.



If I were to be questioned by the severest, most majestic of men, who, since my birth had seen all that I did, said, thought, I would be neither intimidated, nor disconcerted. I would have an answer for everything. Why would I be afraid of God?



What a miracle, the resurrection of the dead when we speak of them.

It is as if they invaded the room and the house.



Life would betray us if it could not bring us death.



The world is inexplicable and incomprehensible because it is not perfect and we are inexplicable and incomprehensible, because we know it.



If God were not as we understand Him, what would He be? Thus, everything depends on what we understand.



If, after our death, we are confronted with a God Who is not the one we expected, whose fault will it be? If we did not understand Him, why did He not make us understand? We could only understand Him, according to the intelligence He gave us.



If God should punish us forever, He would regret it forever.



If He could not create the best, why did He create the worst?



I am told “I would not like to be in your place, the day of Judgment”—“Nor would I like to be in yours. We were born in different parts of the world.”



The people we know best, are the ones we do not know. As we believe we get to know them, we substitute ourselves for them, and they cease to be what they were.



The days I have lived are undisputably mine.  
Would I exchange them for those I have still to  
live?



I saw one of my friends shedding tears over his  
leg which had to be amputated because gangrene  
had set in. The leg was buried, and he did not  
think of it anymore. . . . If *he* would have died,  
would that have been a more memorable event?



What would the world be without God?  
No—thing. There would not be any world.



To cease searching for God means to lose Him  
and to lose oneself, without any hope.



If there is a single question for which a religion  
has no answer, the religion is doomed.



I was for all eternity, even before I was born.  
What did I do during my prenatal existence? Why

should only that which I did since the hour of my birth count on the day of Judgment?



Suppose human life running at today's rhythm and that of plants and animals running ten times faster, around it. We would have ten crops( like the tree the Book of Revelation tells us about, which yielded its fruit twelve times a year), ten wine-harvests, instead of one, ten chickens, ten sheep, ten oxen, etc. It would be a prodigious plenty, the Golden Age, or Paradise regained.

Who is to tell us that such a shifting in time is not possible?



What we call the fall of a star in space is but its movement in the infinite. There can be no fall or ascent in that which has neither top nor bottom, neither right nor left, neither front nor back.



We do not see the essence of the universe. We see only what is within our eye. In the eye of someone who was not of this earth, this tree

might be a bird, this mountain an abyss, this sea,  
I do not know what . . .



And if there should be no more destiny? There will always be one. Destiny is what was as well as what will be. It is impossible that nothing should be; and whatever were not, would still be destiny.



Past destiny is already the shadow of the future.



The eternity of blissfulness being only an immovable moment, will be as if it never were. We shall not feel it.



I remember the gullible preachers of my childhood straining themselves to give us an idea of the eternity of infernal tortures (for hell was the favorite theme of sermons). Imagine, they used to tell us, that a drop of water were to fall every thousand years on the peak of a rock, ten thousand feet high. When, thousand years upon thousand years, the drop of water will have pierced

through the plateau of porphyry, eternity will not have begun.

We would have been more impressed would they have told us: "All your marbles will be confiscated."



Matter is imperishable, indestructible. Why then would the spirit, which is only an emanation or a form of matter, perish or be destroyed?



I am only an instant of God, but all instant is eternal.



Is it true, as has been said, that evolution, as well as all phenomena of life are irreversible?



Water flows more or less rapidly according to the inclination of the slope it follows.

Is the slope followed by time equally variable?



I do not know anything more than any other man; but at least I know that I do not know what he believes he knows.



We admit the existence of matter because it is impossible to deny it. Why not admit also the universal intelligence which is as unquestionable?



The higher the idea we have about God, the less do we understand the world He created. Is it likely that He should have left the function of governing it to laws, to inferior gods, when everything was already within him from the beginning of Time?

One could live if life would lead somewhere; but since it has no other aim than death, one might say: "What is the use?"

But do the things that have happened up to now entitle us to say so?



What would suffering be without an identity? By strenuously digging, the scholars only reached a greater depth of ignorance. But, at the

very depth of this ignorance, we may discover Truth.



If man would last a few thousands of years more, he should most certainly find a God superior to the one we know. What can one do in the meantime? Try to find him.



Since the almighty God we are searching for had at His disposal gold, platinum, iridium, diamonds, etc., why has he tormented us with perishable organs, always on the verge of illness and decay?

Why is He God or why do we imagine He is?  
There is someone behind Him . . .  
It is not easy to be God.



Should I not call, in the hour of my death, a priest, to please those who love me? Why not give them this hope, this consolation?

If God should forgive me through His minister, no matter how, or no matter why, the God in

the name of Whom the priest will speak, will never do something my God would not have done.



“The hypothesis of God has not been weakened since Pascal,” says Octave Beliard, commenting on the beautiful book of Leconte du Nouy, *L’Homme devant la Science*.

This would be true if one could agree on what is meant by the hypothesis of God.

We are always brought back to the great mystery. The only step we ever made told us only what God is not or is no more.



This is something, and is probably all we will know until the end of the earth; except for a great miracle that will overwhelm us.



If everything should happen by mere chance, would the universe be possible? Why not? The existence of the universe would merely prove that chance does not exist and cannot exist, just as chaos and naught cannot be.



I used to know a maniac who enjoyed life only by watching on the dial of a clock, the minutes march past him and disappear in the unknown.



Death, as I was saying in the *Araignée de Verre*, is only an unfortunate word which hides waiting, the great sleep, or a life different from the one we think we lose.



“We are less mistaken in confessing we ignore than in imagining we know many things we do not know,” said Renan in his *The Future of Science*.



There is no unorganized matter. It appears to us as such only because of our unsurmountable ignorance.

Time will disappear at the same time with our memory, just as the space determined by our body will disappear together with it.



Not to hope for anything without despairing.



The dead alone are judged.

If we were able to know the future as we know the past, we would be God.



To live is to believe that one did not die.



Born in blood, it is only fair that we die in blood.



The universe is an urn sealed by its own immensity. Nothing can depart from it, since anything which might believe it escapes would still remain within it.



What will the moral of agnosticism be? After a while, agnosticism will reach heights where it will not need a moral anymore; for moral is indispensable only to those who have sordid thoughts.



His eyes were already dwelling on other worlds.



It has been said that “Man is inclined to admire the creations of the brain more than the brain itself. He has the tendency of forgetting their origin and of conferring upon them a superhuman authority.”

In other words, he omits the genius of God, who gave him his brain and devotes his admiration to the reflected genius, he attributes to himself alone.

We should try to interpret God. All religions attempted it, but none of them succeeded in giving an acceptable version. They all started out from a different and more or less corrupted text. The best and most ancient is the interpretation of Vedism. We should discover the authentic text. We might possibly find it within us.



Think of the thousands of children who die each day, the moment they are born. Why? What for? For what end? As a punishment for whom?



The unexplainable and mad anger of a God against himself . . .



The scientist will never agree on the moment when life first appeared. There was no first manifestation of life in the true sense of the word. Life existed always and everywhere. It is simply a question of knowing at what moment and at what point man first perceived it. It is not a matter of its appearing, but of its being discovered.



If God does not exist, Hazard does. If Hazard exists, it is the part of God that we understand least.

It has its law which can be perceived only in little things, within the reach of our eye and our intelligence.

At Monte-Carlo, for example, the statistics of the roulette tell us that Hazard is not completely crazy, unruly and unbalanced as we are tempted to believe it is.

Rouge et Noir, pair et impair, as an average, in a thousand turns, result in the same totals, with only trifling variations.

Is it not already the sketch of a law of equilibrium or of compensation?



Time, whatever it be, can only lead us to our death. But time flows only for us. In its essence, it is stationary.



It seems rather strange that we should not be able to conceive that which seems to be the simplest and the most self-evident of things: the eternal present. We get lost in it. Incompatibility between our life which is before all movement and the immobility of time, only possible foundation of the universe. What do we expect to understand if we do not understand that?



Eternity will last only one moment, and we do not realize that we are in it.



“At the present time,” says Leconte du Nouy, “in spite of the immense number of resolved prob-

lems, the number of questions which cannot be answered yet, grows steadily.”



Should time and space vanish, with what will we be left?

For they shall both vanish, when we cease to have a body.



What man believes he admires in the God he seeks, thinks or creates is always himself, and in the end, all is self-adoration.



If time should flow backwards, we are told, that is, if the events should move in reverse, all of our physical laws would still be admissible. The signs alone would be changed.



When will God know what human suffering is?



During my prenatal existence, which is inevitable, I must have inevitably prepared what I was to perform and accomplish after my birth.



If there was any wickedness in Adam and in Eve, who was responsible for it?

All the sins of man are not committed by him.



A few say: "And still, if there should be something true in all this?"

It would be so gigantic that, in spite of all tortures, it would be worth living.



When we think of the thousands of hours we had before us in our inexhaustible youth and that we wasted like golden napoleons . . .

A few farthings alone are left in the bottom of an old drawer . . .



"For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead," says Solomon in his *Proverbs* about those who rejoice in doing evil.



I am never alone. I see and hear all my dead friends who surround and follow us everywhere.

What becomes of the dead whom we resuscitate in our conversations and in our memories and who are plunged back into their graves?



Everything that lives: larva, mollusc, insect, plant, infusoria, bacteria knows what it has to do in order to be happy and is satisfied with it. We alone are asking more, without knowing why, without knowing what.



In order to fight against certain beings, we have to lower ourselves to their level, if we are to reach them.



Everything happens because it was ordained. But why was it ordained?



Is the preestablished, predetermined hazard more comprehensible than the hazard we believe fortuitous and accidental?

They belong to the same family and have the same name, which does not mean anything. Time does not have anything to do with it.



I sometimes admire the stupidity of exchanged remarks which do not stop eight or ten out of twenty-four hours and which could fill Josaphat's valley and prevent the resurrection of the dead.



I saw my mother dead. It was she, and yet she had ceased being herself. Something we call eternity was between us. Not even the soul of a mother can pierce it.



What will we do during eternity? Nothing at all, since everything will be done.



Man loses his body, but does not lose his life. But does he lose his body? The body is not around him and does not cover his life anymore,

and yet it goes on living under another form. The connecting link alone is lost.



If we should be sincere with ourselves, how many of us would not truly say: "I slept my life away."



We do not know ourselves better than we know the others. We do not see ourselves, we do not hear ourselves and listen only to the unknown which rules within us and leads us wherever it wants to go.



"I do not ask God," said Gerard de Nerval, "I do not ask God to change anything in relation to events, but to change me in relation to things; to give me the power to create an universe which would belong to me, to govern my dreams, instead of being submitted to them."



Why should death be more important than life?



When the *Yes* and the *No* unite and penetrate each other in Nirvana, which one yields?



Memory does not die. But everything within it lives a latent and immortal life.

The miracle of resurrection occurs within it day after day.



Does not everything which will be done one day, in the succession of times, by somebody to be born of me, act in me already? Am I not already this someone? Does not everything he might have done, even though he be not born, exist already too?

It might be far-fetched; but one can never advance too much in the unknown and one always remains on this side of truth.



We can imagine the eternal and the perfect only in the form of a void. But the void does not have any form.



In theory it is a consolation to believe that intelligence dominates our nerves. It seems to be the floral summit to a sheaf of nerves. But does the secret of the nerves lie in matter or in spirit? We are still in doubt.



The great books strive to attain depths thought has not yet reached.



No use running. We have to die when our time comes.



God does not know man yet. How do you expect man to know God?



How could everything exist if there were no creation? I was asking in the *Hour Glass*.

Because if everything did not exist, I would not have the opportunity of asking anything whatsoever.

Which does not mean anything, for there is nothing to say.



The free will of matter which has been proven beyond doubt, is nothing else but the free will of the spirit, that is submission to the laws of the universe.



How can we imagine our future life, when we shall be deprived of our eyes, ears, nose, and fingers, in a word, of all our senses? Our most spiritual, our most arbitrary thoughts and meditations are born of and nurtured by our senses. These abolished, we fall in the vacuum and are emptied of all. Which does not mean that a purely spiritual life would not be possible; but only that we are unable to imagine it.



We are told that the past undermines the future; but it is equally true that the future undermines the past.



What are the laws of the universe? We know one only, universal attraction, according to which, any two bodies attract each other with a force proportionate to their masses and inversely proportionate to the square of the distance.

This is not knowledge, it is an observation. That is all we know. It is the great law, the basic law and the most mysterious of them all.



Is not the principle known under Heisenberg's law of undetermination, which preoccupied scientific minds, because it seemed to give matter a certain independence, a certain will due to our insufficient means of control?

As Leconte de Nouy, Heisenberg showed that where elementary corpuscles are concerned, we are never in possession of more than half the elements needed to forecast the future.



We are told that chance occurs only once, at the beginning of the universe.

But the universe does not have an origin, or God would not be God.



Our deeds, even our thoughts follow us, we are told. Yes, to the end of our life: what happens after that?



All the disasters that flood us today have been conceived by the brain of a crazy man who made those who had chosen him in their craze, crazier than himself. Thus goes the world and what we call destiny: and where does destiny itself come from? Were we to know that, we would already be in the bosom of God.



All that science has done up to now is just a little scratch on the skin of the universe. It will probably never go any further.



It is fortunate that the memories of the past do not obstruct the road of the future.



We err in our conception of justice, because we forget that for God time does not exist. Everything happens at the same moment. Crime is

accompanied by its punishment. We shall understand that, if we survive our death.



All our discussions of the gods of various religions are only interpretations of the imagination and divagations of primates, who died thousands of years ago, without knowing what we have learned since.



Destiny is what one does not understand; and since we do not understand anything, we wonder where it is.



If I had to live again, I would find a way to avoid being born.



Why fear death, since it is impossible to live forever?

Whatever I said, I believed was the truth, or at least, my last truth. But it seemed less true, once it was expressed; by uttering it, I had killed half of it.



A void is as impossible *before* as *after* the creation of the universe, which never took place anyway.



Matter lives internally with an unbelievable violence, continuously, without rest, without knowing why, eternally, without knowing what it wants. It is what we are, it does what we do.



The greatest joys of life find happiness by resting in sleep. That is what death brings us.



If someone in this or the other world would know something, he would know everything, for it is all or nothing. And if he knew everything, would he not be able to tell us? Whoever knows everything, must be able to do all things; and even saved the damned, if there be any.



Everything the infinite contains must be as infinite as the time at its disposal.



The memory of an imaginary event dies instantly, just as the memory of a dream: the memory of a moment lived never dies.



If I were to become mad, physical suffering, even the tortures of the Inquisition would cease to reach the man I was before my madness. They would harm somebody I do not know, who does not know me and would touch me only if they could bring me back to reason.



Why worry more about *after* than about *before*? They come from the same abyss. Have I suffered? Have I cried before being born?



Our memories are submerged in our life and follow its fluctuations. The greater the heights we reach, the more pure and more beautiful they become. They rot when we fall. The best of them leave us or go into hiding. They cease to recognize us. They are not the same anymore.



He who lives has always lived and cannot cease living.



The real dead would be the one who had the right not to live anymore. But no one ever had this right.



He who is still alive is already as dead as the dead who will be dead only one moment.



The past is reflected in the future, just as the future is reflected in the past.



Whatever was in the past is already in the future.



Each of us bears his destiny within himself. It is important, when a man is involved, to make this destiny as visible, as active as the man who bears it, though he ignores it.



If we were immortal and happy in this very life,  
who would be able to bear it for eternity?

It is true, that with time, we might learn to be  
happy. Why not begin this very day?



For how many thousands of years or centuries  
did the angels and the demons precede man in  
God's experiments?



If it is not worth while living, is it worth while  
dying?

Anyway, considering our task down here, it was  
not worth while being born.



Should man make us despair?  
Why man?



The dead forgive for they cannot do otherwise;  
but what they did might become our future and  
that does not forgive.



We can no more abolish that which will be than that which was; God himself could only do it by abolishing himself.



Man has not yet been happy. Can he be it?



With respect to prenatal memories: I had the very definite impression of “already seen” in a castle that was not yet built when I was born. What is the explanation? May I presume that I have seen it in the mind of the man who was to build it?



Is it possible to admit that God did know what He was doing when He created the world? And if He knew what He was doing, why did He create it as we see it? That, man will never understand.

Unless the world be not such as man see it. But then, why does God want man to see it as such?



He gave the impression of a man who would not be where one believed one could see and touch him.



What would I do if I could start my life all over again?

First of all, I would not die anymore, since it is useless. As for the rest, I would do more or less the contrary of everything I did. It could be no better, but one has to explore all the accessible points of the future.



Does striving for rest in nothingness mean being optimistic or pessimistic? But nothingness, which to us seems the worst, cannot be. Let us then say, rest in the unconscious. But why should this unconscious be final?



A righteous and intelligent man appearing before God would know what to answer Him.

If you should lose your memory and your intelligence in the confusion of the sepulchral passage, you would say nothing because you would cease to be yourself; and then, what happened to your

remains would not concern you anymore. These remains abandoned on their own in the great infinite would have to seek their fortune in other places.



There is no more unhappiness in the infinite.



“How near to God is what is fair” (old Johnson).



To live is to forget that one dies.  
And to die is to forget that one has lived.



How long will it take for our soul to get used to exist without a body?



If we should retain our remembrance after the death of our body, would the memories of the moments we lived wear away in eternity? And when they die, in turn, what will we be left with?



## *The Life of the Dead*

Last night, I had a visit from an uncle who died about fifty years ago. During his lifetime, he was what we call a "jolly old fellow," a positive and practical mind. He told me that the cemetery which we had chosen as his quarters was cozy and well managed by one of his friends of the Great Beyond, a remarkable, decent and distinguished gravedigger. My dear uncle was feeling at home and was very happy. A part of himself, in which he never had been seriously interested, had left him to go he knew not where; but all that was human, solid and well balanced had accompanied him in his new and last abode. The dead had organized, underground, small but very lively friendly, or rather brotherly gatherings, where neighbors met to talk over the happenings of the cemetery, for every day brought new arrivals, two or three dead, sometimes even one or two dozens, in the prosperous days of an epidemic. These unexpected tourists had to be received affection-

ately if they were relatives or friends, and with every courtesy if they were strangers. These gatherings were highly exclusive, and no one was admitted without serious investigations. A class system had spontaneously been established. The deceased were divided in three classes, that is those who, to speak as you speak up here, did not have as yet an evil smell, that is, the new arrivals whose odorless stage was rather transitory; then the ones who emitted strong exhalations, you judge disagreeable, who constituted the middle class, the most numerous, and finally the superior class, the sepulchral aristocracy, whose members were proclaimed immortal because they had ceased emitting any scent, and consisted only of bleached bones, aseptic and carefully polished.

“But, uncle,” I interrupted, “why is it that you do not feel certain emanations that we deem unpleasant? Is it because you do not have a nose?”

“It is not a question of nose anymore, but a purely scientific question. There are no evil smells. It is a regrettable error of the inhabitants on the surface. All odors are chemically pure, whether they come from the lily, the rose, the violet or the gardens of the Great Beyond.”

“Uncle, another question, if I may? . . .”

“Go ahead, dear, go ahead. I am here to answer you, for we know almost everything. . . .”

“Uncle, how do you receive those who have been incinerated?”

“We despise them! They are renegades, traitors, deserters. They are ashamed of death. They disavow it. They would like to abolish it; and when they come here begging for a place for their little jars of human preserves, we throw those little jars out of the window, into eternity, for we are eternal . . .

“But do not speak to me about those people. . . . When do you expect to join me?”

“I do not know yet. Do you?”

“I could know, if I wanted to, but I would not tell you. Anyhow, as soon as you arrive, let me know. I shall take you under my wing and facilitate your admission in our circles, for it involves a lot of red tape. The dead are even worse bureaucrats than the Americans, and for the most unimportant formality, such as recuperating a lost nail, a tooth, or a radius one has to go through twenty offices, give sixty signatures, disclose the first and last names of one’s parents, grand-parents; produce one’s birth certificate, marriage certificate, death certificate of sisters, brothers, first and other

cousins. It is a deplorable habit of which we have as yet not been able to rid ourselves. It is true that it takes care of our moments of leisure which are long, although very agreeable. . . .”

“Uncle, I also would like to ask you . . .”

“Go on, go on, my child, I am at your disposal.”

“What will you do when there is no more place left in your garden in the Great Beyond? It seems to be rather crowded already.”

“We will take the one of the living.”

“And if they do not want to give it up to you?”

“We will make dead out of them.”

“Does that mean that you have the right to kill?”

“We do not have to kill them. We have only to wait. It is time which kills them.”

“But uncle, what happens in case of exhumation? What happens to you? What do you feel?”

“We did not have any exhumation yet; but there has been some talk about it. . . . It is supposed to be more unpleasant than moving. You lose everything and do not find your own friendships and little schemes anymore. Happily, exhumation occurs rather seldom. . . .”

“I can see, uncle, that not even death is free of troubles.”

“What do you expect, my child, all lives have their little inconveniences.”

“Uncle, I would also like to ask you . . . Uncle, where are you? . . . Are not you going to answer me anymore? . . .”

I insisted in vain, I did not get an answer. He had returned into eternal silence. . . .

## Notes

This rose withers, sheds its leaves, disappears and lives for one moment in my memory which will forget, tomorrow. Why should it be different for man?



Our immortality will begin when we succeed in imagining that we do not live in time, that we are outside time, that time does not exist.



The happiest days take us more rapidly towards death than the others, as if, in order to obey justice, happiness would consume us more rapidly than sorrow.



Let us follow the life of Balzac's heroes. None is happy to the end. If there were no sorrows,

there would be no novels, no stories. There would be nothing to say. But there will always be sorrows, for there is nothing else in human lives.



If God should want to die, if God could die, what would become of us? Nothing, like himself; but nothing would become God, and nothing would be changed in the universe. Everything is, was and will be as before; and death would become life again.



When you know everything, you will still ask questions; and when you ask no more questions, you will be dead.

But the most unimportant question surpasses everything one can know.



I would like to be the witness of the invisible and the imperceptible. It is a dangerous game, or rather, it is not a game.



The religion of a Babbitt or of the average American: "One has tried to create a Supreme Being, who tried to create us perfect, but who did not as yet succeed." It is not bad at all . . .



The unfortunate are the deaf-and-dumb of destiny.

We all live among deaf-and-dumb; and those who speak most, do not as yet realize that they do not say anything.



"God does not know what He is doing," cries out the hero of I do not remember what play. It is the great cry one should not utter. We are the ones who do not know what He did.



It is not enough to break the clock or the hour-glass to abolish, upset or forget the hours. We imagine we are accomplishing that when we amuse ourselves.



The secret of Gerard de Nerval, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and many others was that, believing in the accuracy of incomplete, apocryphal documents, most of them originating in the Alexandrine period, they thought they were initiated into mysteries, to revelations which did not exist.

Which does not mean that there are many things we do not know. They do not depend on initiation, but on science, which discovers them little by little.



If I could and would start my life all over again, it would be I who would confront my death. I would not be happier, nor would I be more unhappy; and everything would end in the same image.

For although everything changes continuously in our body and in our mind, we feel that we will never be able to free ourselves of our self, no matter how repulsive it appears to us.



All seek happiness and receive only death.  
Is happiness within it or beyond it?



God bears within Him all worlds, as we bear  
the molecules of our body.



## *The Circumcised of Sichem*

We read in the Genesis that Dinah, daughter of Jacob, was carried off by Sichem, son of Hemor, who raped her. Then he prayed Jacob and his sons to give her him to wife. And the sons of Jacob answered they could not give their sister to one that was uncircumcised. Besides, every male of his country had to be circumcised. And every male harkened unto Hemor and unto Sichem and every male was circumcised. And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they took their sheep, and their wives and their little ones.

And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi: Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land. And I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.

And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?

And such was the moral of a saintly family of those ancient times, whose father, almost every day, had friendly talks with God.

And, since we are in the Bible, let's stay one more moment to revise the Judgment of Solomon.



## The Judgment of Solomon

We read in the third chapter of the first Book of Kings, that when Solomon woke up from a dream in which he had asked God “understanding to discern judgment” he had to pass judgment on two women, that were harlots and who were delivered of a child. And the child of one of the women died during the night, because she overlaid it.. “This mother,” said the other woman, who lived together with her in the house, “arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me while I slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.”

“Nay,” said the other woman, “but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son.”

Thus they spake before the king, repeating indefinitely the same story as women do. And Solomon said: “Bring me a sword and divide the child in two and give half to the one, and half to the other.”

“Then,” according to the Bible, “spake the

woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, "O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it." But the other said, "Let it neither be mine nor thine, but divide it."

Then, the king answered and said, "Give her the living child and in no wise slay it; she is the mother thereof."

And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment.

This is the text of the Vulgate which is, as we know, Saint Hieronymus' Latin translation of the Greek version of the Septuagint.

The Book of Kings seems to have been written seven hundred years before Jesus Christ. The Hebrew or Aramaean version of the documents was made at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphes by seventy-two Jews from Egypt, the year 282 or 283 of our era.

However, unknown fragments of the "Book of Kings," which, without contradicting the official texts of the Catholic Church, give certain details which were not to be found in the version of the Septuagint, were recently found in a cave, in the

vicinity of Alexandria. It mentions, for example, that one of the two women who were delivered, at three days interval, was rich and powerful, and that the other was her servant. The child who died, smothered by his mother, was the child of the rich and powerful woman, who exchanged the children, during the servant's sleep.

After the test of the sword, which designated the true mother, Solomon crowned his wisdom, by ordering that the living child be given to the woman who was not his mother, because, being rich and powerful, the child would be happier with her. After which, he asked the two rivals to become friends again and to shake hands. The slave did not dare disobey; but hardly had she touched the other woman's hand, than she uttered a horrible cry, ran out of the room and up the stairs leading to a terrace, threw herself into the void and was crushed on the stones of a yard, whitewashed like a tomb.

The exegetists of the Bible do not yet agree as to the authenticity of these fragments, probably preceding the version of the seventy-two Egyptian Jews.



It has been noticed since 1633, when the Puritans of New England made their first observations, that the larvae of the periodic grasshopper, also called 17 years grasshopper, appear always by thousands, on May 25th.

A new mystery to be added to the great mysteries of insects.

Certitude: What is, is.

The unknowable: Why the existence of that which is?



In the shadows of death, I threw the anchor into the sky.



I knew a man who “would have made sorrow itself laugh,” as the Russians say: and a miser who would have found gold in Harpagon’s shin-bone.



We would be, even if we were not born.



“One walks,” says Saint Paul, “in hope against hope.”

Despair can always be converted into hope. It is just a matter of time.

Only at the end of our life will we know the burden of the hours accumulated on our shoulders and which we shall bear until our death, to be offered to God.



## *The Rebellious Shadow*

In a scenario I have just finished, I told how, one morning, before the hour of mass, under the portal of a Breton church, an old, blind beggar was offering, without knowing it, between the small change, in the tin-cup he was holding out to the passers-by, a glorious piece of gold. A venerable, white-bearded judge, going to mass, saw the gold piece, exchanged it slyly with a poor copper coin and cold-bloodedly put it into his purse.

The blind man did not see anything, but although he and the judge were alone under the portal, a great, heart-breaking cry was heard, which could only be uttered by the very shadow of the magistrate. The shadow detached itself, and withdrew suddenly from under the judge's feet, turned against him, cursed, and ran away. Bewildered, the old judge ran after it, caught it, cornered it in a place where it was losing itself in the shadow, seized it by the throat and asked it what was the matter. It answered that, in the future, it

would pursue him in all places, would block his way, rouse all those who did not yet know him and would wait for him at his death-bed to fling him into the eternal shadow.



This is the righteous shadow, the indignant and revolted shadow. It was born from the man who lost his shadow and is only an emanation of our conscience.



# Happiness

Every man has his happiness, he is himself his happiness. Often the happiness of one is the sorrow of others, and vice-versa.

Happiness will never be greater than the idea we have of it. It will always take shape in our thoughts and will be established in our memory.

For many, the whole world is not large enough to hold the happiness they covet. They travel around the earth in quest of it and do not find it.

Others do not even think of going in quest of it. It fills the year round, and from dusk to dawn the little room they do not leave; and when they are visited by death, they still smile.

A poor wretched woman had never realized that she was unhappy; she had to be told. She did not believe her eyes nor her ears.

Another had been happy for years, only by forgetting about happiness.

A third, we are told by an American novelist,

so painstakingly realistic and so sincere that her tales are more like biographies, a third had spent five years of her life in a garret knitting a marvelous quilt. She had an ideal. She believed she was in heaven.

A modest local exhibition bestowed the honorary prize upon her. She died of joy.



I do not advise you to imitate these snail-like happinesses. They merely prove that happiness can hide anywhere and it simply has to be discovered. Whether it be in a palace or in a log-cabin, it always has the color of our soul.



“Happy in his misfortune,” says Andromache, speaking about Hector’s son. There often is happiness in sorrow, and more often even, sorrow in happiness.



## Happy Little Lives

I was privileged in having, during my childhood, a close view of a few happy little lives. Two of my aunts and a cousin were Beguines in a Beguine convent, in Gand. My mother visited them once a week and it was a pleasure to accompany her, for the saintly women were very fond of sweets and stuffed me with candy and ginger bread.

As you know, the Beguines do not pronounce any vow, have to be in at nightfall, agree to live unmarried, a vow which can be changed, and wear a uniform which originated in the thirteenth century. They make lace and embroidery, and lead a modest but easy life, which enables them to have, every Sunday, the boiled chicken and crême caramel of respectable family boarding houses. Up to my first communion, that is up to the age of ten, I was permitted to listen to their edifying nonsense. Full of respect and of conviction, I was telling myself, while chewing my lolly

pops, under a table, that I would hear them talk only about God, the Holy Virgin, Angels and celestial happiness. This never happened. All their uninterrupted conversations were about the little oddities of the chaplain, who liked white wine, about the ways of the Mother Superior, about the stinginess of Sister Aglaia, about Sister Euphemia's inconsiderate remarks, about Sister Philomena's intrigues, of the bitter words of Sister Anastasia, and about the little dishonest dealings of the nun in attendance.

They are happy, my mother used to say. They have everything one can wish for, and they have God too. They live in the richness of laces, the perfume of incense, the music of the organ, the flowers and birds of their tiny gardens, what else do they need?

"They are happy because they have God too." Yes, but what God? Anyhow, they were satisfied, and, as, in spite of themselves, He is greater than in their minds, He makes them happier than their thoughts would deserve and everything was happening in a sort of luke-warm bliss, within their reach and at their size. . . .

I was not convinced. It is true, that behind them there was a paradise greater than their lawns,

where their three goats were grazing; but they did not seem to notice it. The immobility of their existence made them happy. They had an idea which was worth more or less the ones we do not yet possess; and the idea, no matter how little, even if it cannot be seen, even if it cannot be heard, even if it has neither head nor tail, helps to grasp a little bit of happiness.



## The Travellers

The man who travels much, who, in the fear of not having seen everything, wanders across the earth in quest of scenery, sites and what was known in the time of Louis-Philippe as "the great spectacles of nature" (Niagara, Mont-Blanc, Mexico, Pyramids, etc.), this man craves for the extraordinary, and for what he is told is beauty. But having lived only in the ordinary, everything seems to him extraordinarily ordinary; and having known only ugliness, he crashes into beauty without recognizing it. He sees everything, without looking at anything, and when he looks, he does not see anymore. Thus, he wanders from marvel to marvel, just as his dog, accompanying him, goes very seriously from post to post, and they return with about the same impressions.

Sceneries, forest paths, sea coves pass before our eyes but descend and settle in our life only if our glance understands and consecrates them.

We have around us what he is looking for at the

other end of the world. There are gardens, trees, water, palaces, humble but smiling dwellings everywhere, that is enough to please our eyes, until death do them close on a beautiful memory.

What belongs to us is not what we have looked at, but what has entered our soul.



Without realizing it, all those great travellers, and the little ones too, do not cease running away from something which expects them everywhere. Is it themselves, is it death?



## Notes

The more my spirit revolves around my God, the wider become the circles with which I surround him. The farther I get from what he was in my thoughts, the closer I come to what He shall be in my life beyond the grave.



The unhappier man is, the more he clings to life, as if he would expect a requital or a compensation.

Happier hands let go of life easier.



If we could have seen our happy days reflected in the future, as our memory beholds them in the past, would we have taken the trouble to wait for them?



One could say that our thoughts are the bones of our soul, supporting its invisible structure. Why should they perish more rapidly than the bones of our body which are almost indestructible?



Life never led but to death. Where do you want it to lead? There are only two lives that count: the one which precedes our earthly existence, and the one which follows our death on this earth. The in between is but a twinkling of the eye of eternity.



We see what fleeting Time brings us; but do we notice what it carries away? The days and the hours go with the stream, sometimes slowly and peacefully, on the plains, sometimes rapidly and furiously between rocks. It carries away the wrecks of our bodies, our teeth and our hair, our strength and our health, together with the wreckage of our soul, our thoughts, our will, all our hopes which we shall never see again; and which shall disappear in death.



Do not be fools, when you complain, when you talk about your sorrows, everybody listens, nobody hears you.



To believe in demons means to create them within us and to hand over our life to wicked thoughts.

If we could see man surrounded by his incarnate ideas, alive, howling, innumerable, and not allowing him to do what he wants, to go where he wants, in a word to be his own master, we would be horrified.



God did not yet say his last word; he probably did not even pronounce the first one.



The quantity of matter contained in the universe must necessarily be infinite. Who or what could limit it? On the other hand, the space enclosing it is equally infinite. There always seems to be more space than matter, nevertheless; for space without matter would not be called space. This means that there are two infinities, one of

which will always be greater than the other. Is this explicable? But is not everything inexplicable?



When we read the Old Testament, we find that God has always set a very bad example for man. Anyway, how could man invent his vices and his crimes if God did not plant them in him? Where could he find them, since he only has that which God gave him?



The demon prompted him, we are told. But who created the demon? Always the same unanswerable question. What is God complaining about?



In spite of all the discoveries of science and all the accumulation of human knowledge, the poet of our days, as Henry David Thoreau said, has only what Homer had.



The mere fact of being eternal becomes, when one thinks about it, a frightening phenomenon;

it was so simple and so reassuring not to exist at all.



The best part of travelling is the before and the after; the least pleasant is the travelling itself.

One travels only because one does not find happiness at home.



Is my soul the prisoner of my body, or is it its master? They do not speak the same language, do not use the same words, do not seem to have common interests and did not understand each other until now.

I sometimes hear them converse like Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Jesus being wearied sat on Jacob's well. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. And He added: If thou knewest who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

Sir, the woman saith unto him, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Jesus

saith unto her: Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. It shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

Then Jesus spoke kindly to her about the five husbands she had had and the lover she still had. The woman left, without having understood anything.

Jesus did not insist, which proves that he did not particularly wish to have people understand all he said . . .



Let us imagine a play in three acts and even in verse, if necessary, on Lazarus seducing the woman taken in adultery . . .

Let us not forget that she had touched God, and that he had known death.



I have never known, I have never seen my grandfather's father. I do not remember having heard anybody ever speak about him. It is never-

theless certain that he lives within me. Is there any reason why he should not make himself known one day, why he should not tell what he was, what he did, since he is often seen by my eyes? It is very possible to find at last the means of awakening or galvanizing these dead who are still alive and to make them speak.



Let us review the three solutions: I. To cease to exist or to be annihilated. Impossible. II. To become different from what we were. Of no avail. This does not concern us anymore. III. To continue to be that which one was; the only solution to be afraid of.

Is it not the one we would like most?



Our very eyes hide the universe from us.



The dead did not die. What is one when one is not dead? Perhaps everything.



He? we used to say about a friend who suffered all his life without complaining, he would not even complain if he were dead.



If I were to die today or tomorrow, what would be the difference? It would be as if I had always been dead. Every man dies before his death.



After a certain age, one knows dead people only. An effort of imagination is necessary to enable us to admit that some of the living are still alive.



Why revenge? Time will take care of it and will be more cruel than we.



If the world were not led by a universal intelligence, you would have to admit a universal stupidity.

Is it not as impossible as nothingness?

But if there were a universal intelligence, we would not understand its mistakes.

It is true that, granting a universal stupidity, there would be only mistakes and all life would become impossible.



What is the language of death? We do not know as yet. Nobody understands it.

What about the dead?

They do not talk, they say all in the language of silence.



There is a very beautiful French expression, by an unknown poet, saying about a sudden and inexplicable silence: "*An angel goes by . . .*"

Most of the time it is just stupidity falling asleep; but sometimes a real unknown presence passes, summoned by a thought which did not know how or did not dare to express itself . . .



I do not say what I think, I say *what people think in me*.

All we can imagine existed, exists or shall exist somewhere; otherwise, we would be unable to

imagine it, for imagining would be creating it,  
and we would be God.



In what world, in what times gone by, were we  
only a demon?



If something could be found outside God, this  
something would be as much God as God Himself.



I have already buried half of myself.



No government will ever be good, for man, in  
a crowd, is too stupid an animal to let himself be  
led by intelligence.

On the other hand, history tells us that the best  
government becomes, by endosmosis, after a cer-  
tain length of time, as stupid as the masses it leads  
to catastrophe.



At Charenton, the great refuge of the insane, at  
the gates of Paris, I met a madman who *was sell-*  
*ing time*. For a quarter, he would give you a check,

prolonging your life by five years from the day on which you were supposed to die. The idea was not silly. This is just what the priests do when they sell three hundred days of indulgence to be cashed in purgatory.



One night, in Gheel, I listened to a conversation between a madman who thought that he was not yet born and one of his comrades who was convinced he was already dead. They discussed in a very friendly way and seemed to agree perfectly, because they were listening only to their own arguments and not at all to those of the opposite side.



## ROUND

All sorrows of the world  
Come from another world,  
Which gives unhappiness  
And keeps its happiness.  
Let's dance our rounds  
Around their happiness,  
Since all unhappiness  
Will be in our world . . .

Let's dance, let's dance our rounds  
Around better days  
Which are in the other world  
So that happiness stays. . . .



### FAMILY LIFE

The sun glitters.  
Let's go to the country. . . .  
With the cat as company.  
But home the dog remains . . . .  
Shk, shk, says the mouse,  
And the rat dances in the house. . . .



### GOOD ADVICE

Go wherever your eyes lead you,  
Towards evil, towards good,  
Towards pleasure, towards sorrow  
Towards everyday tears,  
Towards happiness, which is not,  
Go wherever your eyes lead you,  
For tomorrow God will close them . . . .



## The Old Tree

I think of the trees I have known. I have known quite a number of trees, having lived a great many years in the country. I see them, as if I would still be in their shade. I remember their name, their appearance and their character. The memory of a beautiful, friendly and faithful tree (they are all faithful) can have on our life and our destiny as great an influence as the memory of a man or of a woman.

I always loved them and I always pitied them. They are the ones sacrificed, the most innocent victims of nature's injustice. Eternal prisoners, chained down by their roots, powerless and resigned, they cannot run away from storms and expect only sorrows. In wintertime, naked and bare, attacked by snows and ice, they shiver in the dark. The birds alone visit them, live with them, awaken them, talk to them about the skies and teach them to smile . . .

They are all condemned to the torture of mo-

tionless death, of the advancing and unavoidable death. It is true that the little plants die the same death: but at least their suffering does not last for years. They cease living as soon as they blossom, while their great brothers wait, for centuries, for their last hour of suffering.

I was the friend of an old oak-tree who lived peacefully in a small wood I used to own, in Medan, in the neighborhood of Paris, a little wood burned down by the Germans.

This majestic tree, who reminded me of La Fontaine's oak, had suffered very much.

He stood on a kind of cliff overlooking the road leading from Poissy to Rouen. The humus was not very deep and the roots achieved miracles in order to find some nourishment in the rock. They seemed at the end of their strength and courage. On a stormy night, lightning struck his very heart. He was slowly but proudly dying of starvation. I took an interest in his health and visited him twice or three times a week. He was not speaking to me, but I knew that he was pleased.

With a tremendous effort, he revived each spring, a few branches, which he was unable to feed until Fall; and, beginning of August, he was plunged in the deep slumber of winter.

I felt sorry for his prolonged and hopeless agony, which was undermining him, made him rot and, obviously, suffer. I gave the order to fell him. I did not have the courage to be present at the immolation. When he fell, one of his heavy branches killed a wood-cutter. I was told that the tree had not done it on purpose. The wood-cutter was drunk.

His trunk was cut up into pieces. His concentric rings indicated three hundred and fifty years. According to the width of the rings, one could distinguish the years of drought, suffering and wretchedness from the years of rain and prosperity. Just like in human lives, the years of suffering and wretchedness were more numerous than the others.

What happened to his remains? I did not wish to know. Where do dead trees go? Do we know where we go?



## The Mutiny of Trees

Since we are among trees, let us sit down, for a moment, as Phaedra wished it, "in the shadow of the woods."

In a fairy-play, entitled "*The Night of Children*," I presented the mutiny of trees which were to be felled. Two children, Patroclus and Jocella, are in the log-cabin of a game-keeper, on the skirt of an old forest, when, one evening, somebody knocks at the window. Patroclus lifts the curtain and yells: "It's a tree! . . ."

JOCELLA

What, a tree? . . .

PATROCLUS

Yes, a tree, a real tree, with leaves and branches . . .

JOCELLA

Is he big?

PATROCLUS

Yes, it is the old oak from the edge of the road.  
(*To the tree*) What do you wish?

THE TREE

I want to come in to talk to you confidentially...

PATROCLUS

But you will not be able to come in. You are  
much too big . . .

THE TREE

Do not be afraid, I can shrink as much as I want.  
(*The tree comes in, shrinking as he enters.*)

THE TREE

May I sit down?

PATROCLUS

(*Offering a chair.*)  
Please do. . .

THE TREE

(*Sitting down.*)  
I lost the habit of walking since I was born. . .

This is why I came to see you. We know that it has been decided to cut us to make place for a great cemetery. We like the cemeteries which nourish our roots. But we do not admit to be cut down without being consulted, even less so since, once we are felled, our roots will not be nurtured by the dead. Besides, we have been sold for next to nothing, which is an insult. What is your opinion about it?

PATROCLUS

I think it is a shame.

THE TREE

You can stop it. . . .

PATROCLUS

Me? I would like to do it, but how?

THE TREE

We know that you are a friend of the fairies. All we want you to do is to ask them to punish with death the man who will strike the first blow with his ax. You cannot refuse us this small favor . . .

PATROCLUS

But the fairies will say no . . .

THE TREE

We know that they cannot refuse you anything.  
It is written in the soil.

PATROCLUS

It is awful . . . I can not take such a responsibility . . .

THE TREE

If you do not stop the crime, we shall revolt . . .

PATROCLUS

How will you do it? You cannot move.

THE TREE

You shall see what we can do when we are desperate. . . . We shall attack the village and the castle. We have allies in the park, in the orchard and even in the kitchen garden, among the fruit trees, who are treated by men like slaves. We do not like men any more since the invention of sawmills and paper pulp, and we shall have no mercy . . . People do not know yet what a

mad tree can do . . . First, the great maple-trees of the avenue, the heaviest and the most aged among us, will start moving at night-fall. Their mass will crush everything. They will spare nothing and no one; And since your house is in their way, you will be the first to be sacrificed. you should therefore act as soon as possible.

PATROCLUS

All right, I shall think it over . . .

THE TREE

Do not waste any time. In an hour, it will be too late . . .

PATROCLUS

*(Taking the tree to the door.)*

Thank you.

The tree holds out one of his branches and the child shakes it as if it were a hand.

After a little while, the log-cabin opens on a stormy night and a wooded countryside. The trees are restless and start moving up to the horizon of the sloping hills. One hears the maple-trees singing to the rhythm of their march.

Ploc, ploc, ploc!  
In our great silence,  
In the eternal silence,  
Justice advances,  
Our steps will be heard  
And God will understand. . . .

Plan, plan, plan!  
We did not speak up  
When earth was born  
We had to keep silent  
And live under the earth  
And eat earth . . .

Tramp, tramp, tramp!  
The ax is felling us,  
But will not defeat us,  
And man is too ungrateful . . .  
We had to keep silent  
But we shall revenge  
We shall devour him  
When he shall be under the earth . . .  
He will hear our steps  
And will be unable to move.



In ranks of four, the gigantic maple-trees of the avenue advance towards the castle. Arriving before the gate, they run into two tricentenary cedar-trees, trying to defend the entrance. The cedar-trees are pushed aside with a crash, and the maple-trees invade the park, where the crazed lindens start spinning around and around like tops, before trying to run away. The unconquerable maple-trees, still in ranks of four, invade the kitchen-garden by sheer force, knocking down old, terrified pear-trees, which, after the very first blow, lose all their fruit, shedding them around like tears. Only a guard of faithful pines tries to block the way. A battle soon begins, in a silence troubled only by the sound of breaking wood and the fall of heavy bodies. But a storm rises and all ends in a general panic, among claps of thunder, lightning, and the roaring of unfettered tempest.

## The Child Which Does Not Want to Be Born

*On the edge of the road, a Breton Calvary. The village priest and doctor come in and stop before the Calvary.*

### THE PRIEST

Something has to be done about this Calvary before it falls to pieces. It is the only monument of these parts and it should not be allowed to die.

### THE DOCTOR

You are right. I have already talked to the mayor and I shall mention its pitiful condition to the Municipal Council . . .

### THE PRIEST

Who is this woman coming towards us? I do not know her.

## THE DOCTOR

She is a refugee from the North. She lost her mind because of the horrors she witnessed in this war. She imagines she will give birth to a child which does not want to be born. And she believes she holds it in her arms. She talks to it and listens to its answers as if it would be already born. Let us hide behind these stones and we will witness the scene which occurs every morning in front of this Calvary.

*(Enters a woman, who seems to hold in her arms a baby, covered in a woolen blanket.)*

## THE WOMAN

*(Talking to the imaginary child.)*

Oh, what are you doing? You are hurting me.  
. . . Are you in a hurry to be born? . . .

You are kicking me. . . . Your little feet are already strong, you know. . . .

You do not want to be born? . . .

This is stupid. . . . You do not have the choice . . .

You do not want to leave me? . . . I understand, do not worry, we shall not part . . . You shall always be in my arms, always, always . . .

You shall always be where I am, until the day,

until the day when I shall be no more. . . . Let us not talk yet about it . . .

You do not want to show yourself?

Are you not curious to see what I see?

Do you want me to tell you what it is? . . .

You would not understand . . .

One understands only what one sees.

You do not want to see?

Do not turn your head away, do not close your eyes . . . You do not want to open them?

You should not do that. It is very beautiful . . . There is, first, day and night . . .

The light and the shadow, the sun, the stars and the moon . . .

Can you see all that? . . . No? . . . You cannot see?

Are you afraid? . . .

What are you afraid of? . . . There is nothing to be feared . . . I shall always be with you . . . You do not want to come into the world?

But it is not possible. It has never happened before . . . You do not care?

You are strange . . . But do not laugh like this . . . People will wonder what is going on here . . . Be quiet . . .

We will have a good time once you are born . . .

I already have dolls for you, dolls? . . . You will not like dolls? . . . You want a wooden-horse, a gun and a locomotive? . . .

Ah, I see what it is. The Gentleman is a boy, the Gentleman smokes a pipe . . .

All right, we will see. A boy is bigger, stronger, more serious and is worth four girls . . . I'll have to kiss you four times more . . .

How we will understand each other and how we understand each other! . . .

We shall be happy . . . People will not understand . . . We alone will understand . . . Do you know what being happy means? . . . No, I do not yet know it myself. . . . We shall have to be two to find out . . .

I have not yet seen you, you have not yet seen me . . . This is not living . . . I cannot even kiss you . . . That must stop . . .

Oh, you are hurting me, but I do not mind it! . . .

You do not want to come?

But what will you do, where will you go if you are not born? . . .

There will be no place for you on earth . . . They will put you under the earth and I shall lose my mind . . .

You do not want to be born to die? . . .

But you die by not being born . . . One cannot die once one has lived . . .

You do not want to try? . . . You do not risk anything, it does not commit you . . .

You do not want to be a soldier? . . .

You do not want to be born, in order not to be thrown into the horrors of war as soon as you will be able to stand up . . .

You say there are thousands who refuse . . .

But how do they know what they are doing? . . .

Because they know everything?

How do they know everything?

Because they are not yet born? . . .

But little silly, they only think they know everything, but they do not yet know that there will be no more wars, that it is done for, once and for all and for ever, for men have understood at last that they cannot find happiness by killing one another.

After all, what do you want? . . . You are not sensible. . . .

You do not want anything at all?

There is not any nothing at all, and it is not possible.

You say that later, when you grow up, you will make me unhappy . . .

You have to commit a crime?

This is not possible either . . .

You tell me it is sure? . . . What of it? you will commit it and I shall still love you . . . No matter what you do, I shall never cry as long as you shall be alive. . . .

You can hurt me, it is true, but that does not count . . . What can matter if I have you, and I shall have you always . . .

To live is useless? Who told you that? . . .

One has to have lived in order to enjoy death . . .

You shall have nothing, if you do not come into the world . . .

Please, please, nothing is lost. Do not tremble, do not cry like that.

What is the matter with you? . . . Your sobs will kill me.

But what is wrong with you? . . . You faint? . . .

What are you doing? . . . Where are you going? . . . You do not weigh anything any more. . . . I do not hear you breathe any more . . . I do not feel your little arms any more . . . Where are they? . . .

Who is taking you away? . . . What is it? . . .  
But it is not possible . . .

*(Shaking the empty blankets.)* But you are  
not here any more . . . I have nothing left?

. . . I do not have anything in the world! . . .

*(She falls, face on the ground, shaken with  
sobs.)*

*(The priest and the doctor hurry towards her.)*

#### THE DOCTOR

*(Lifting her a little to make her lean against a  
tree.)*

Please, Madam . . . Do you feel better? . . .  
Rest for a while under this tree . . . The crisis  
is over . . . It is nothing . . . Is he not yet born?

#### THE WOMAN

They have taken him away from me once  
more . . .

#### THE DOCTOR

Who took him away from you?

#### THE WOMAN

The same ones.

THE DOCTOR

Do not be afraid, we shall find him again . . .

THE WOMAN

He is immortal!

THE PRIEST

Like all of us . . .

THE DOCTOR

We will take you home . . .

*(They leave, helping the woman.)*

*“Why kill yourself since you die  
when you are born.”*

## The Man Who Wants to Commit Suicide

In one of the preceding notes, I referred to Gheel. It is a little town in Belgium, fifty kilometers from Bruxelles, where, generation after generation, since the thirteenth century, the inhabitants are used to live with lunatics. Today, the small town has eighteen thousand inhabitants, out of which three thousand five hundred are officially declared insane. Each family has its lunatic. He lives and works with his master, either in the fields, or in the little rustic stores or workshops, like the children of the household. Unpleasant accidents or incidents very seldom occur and everybody lives happily.

Here, we do not deal, like in Charenton, with the insane in their unruly, natural condition. Some progress has been achieved, they are tamed lunatics. Without being submitted to any special

treatment, they are sometimes spontaneously cured.

It was in this little fabulous town, that I met two "boarders," as they are called by euphemism, who interested me. One of them had revealed, under the seal of secrecy, to one of his colleagues, that he had decided to take his life. The other one, heartily approving of this resolution, had added that *he would follow him into the grave, provided he would be the first to go.* "But you must kill yourself right away, for it is dangerous, because of the supervisor who might put you in jail."

"I cannot do it right away. There are certain matters I have to attend to and I have to make three wills."

"But you told me you did not have any money."

"I shall have some as soon as I will be dead. We will discuss it tomorrow."

Next day, they met under the portal of the church.—"Well, is it for today?" asked the funeral accomplice. "I shall help you as best I can but we do not have any time to waste. I have been told that the supervisor has been informed about it, and will stop us. I do not know whether you noticed it, but, here, the walls really seem to have

ears. I can see them 'stick out of the stones. Do you not see them? Look right and left, there are thirteen . . . Do you see them?"

"No, I am somewhat near-sighted. Now, coming back to our plan. I am as much in a hurry as you are, but I do not know how to kill myself . . . I did not choose yet . . ."

"There is plenty to choose from. For example, how would you like to break your head against the wall of the church? I will keep the sacristan who counts the candles busy."

"No, no, not that. . . . The walls are too hard; let us try to find something else . . ."

"Would you like some rat-poison? I have a pocket-full of it . . ."

"No, no, I do not like that either. It might give me a tummy-ache."

"I have a well-sharpened knife, with which, you can choose either to stab yourself in the heart or to cut your throat."

"I do not want that either. It is too dangerous . . . I might miss myself and besides the sight of blood makes me sick . . ."

"I swear I do not see how I could be of service to you any more . . . Wait, I have an idea . . . I saw, in my master's barn, a wonderful rope. I

shall bring it to you this afternoon, unless you find a more advantageous opportunity until then . . .”

“It is a deal . . . I shall wait for you here; and now, swear before God, not to talk about it . . .”

They met again in the afternoon.

“Well, are you not dead yet?”

“No, I am waiting for the rope you promised me.”

The other unwrapped a beautiful new rope and presented it to his friend saying: “Here it is . . .”

The candidate for suicide unravelled it, examined it and declared:

“It is too hard and too rough. It would rub the skin off my neck. I do not want it . . .”

“Very well, I have something much better in mind. I succeeded in swiping from the sacristy the little key of the door to the stairway leading to the top of the steeple. Here it is. You will have a beautiful death, the death of birds in free air, death between heaven and earth, the death of angels . . .”

“No, no, I don’t want it. I get dizzy even when I stand on a chair. I do not want it. . . .”

“I must say you are not reasonable . . . I do not know what to offer you any more . . . Why

do you not confess that you do not want to die.”

“That is the only thing I want, but why do you not keep out of it? And why do you want me to die? . . .”

“I do not really care, but you wanted to take your life and I only tried to help you . . .”

“I do not want any of your funeral services, nor those of others who poke their noses in other people’s business . . . I have my own idea. I want to drown myself.”

“But, my poor friend, it is impossible . . . You know very well that there is no water around here . . .”

“I shall find one . . . I have plenty of time to look for one . . .”

“I just remembered something. . . . How about the pond of the castle? . . .”

“What pond?”

“You know very well, the one in which Princess Isabella wanted to drown herself . . .”

“But she did not drown.”

“She could not. There was not enough water . . .”

“Is there enough now?”

“I do not know, there is never any.”

“This what I was looking for . . . We might go and see, and, if there is not enough I shall wait for the next rain.”

“But you could not be drowned in rain. . . .”

“No, but you can get wet, and this is already something; it is the beginning of the end . . .”

“I do not understand.”

“It is obvious . . . One catches cold and one dies without really committing suicide. It is very advantageous from the point of view of hell or purgatory.”

“This is not serious. . . . Confess right away that you do not feel like dying . . .”

“I am dying to do it, but do not stop me by trying to help me.”

“Your ingratitude tops everything! . . . I have been told that you are crazy but I did not believe . . .”

“I have been told that you are crazy too and I believed it right away.”

“You are yellow . . .”

“Would you dare say that again?”

“Why say it again since you heard it?”

“Careful now, here comes the supervisor . . .”

“He is crazy . . .”

“You found that out too?”

“Everybody knows it, except himself . . . That is why he was made supervisor.”

“You should not trust him. He is jealous and might put you in the clink.”

“Let us talk about other things, of spring for instance . . .”

“But, it is not spring, it is Fall.”

“That is just it. He will think we are crazy and will not bother about us any more.”

“Shsh! . . . Is spring not beautiful?”

“Rather rainy, but very pleasant for this time of the year and for strawberries . . .”

*(Enters the supervisor.)*

“What are you two doing alone in this corner? You look like conspirators.”

“Sir, it is not me, it is him. He was talking about spring . . .”

“Informer! He is the one who wants to die.”

“This is not true. He wants me to die.”

“What is all this about? Die, die, you want to die, what for? Everybody can do that. Everybody will die, and it does not lead to anything, at least we do not yet know where it leads, therefore it is preferable not to go.”

“Sir, do you think I shall not die if you cure me?”

“Be reasonable. You know very well that I shall cure you if you do not die. This is my profession. It is as simple and clear as daylight . . . Well, let’s not talk about it any more and drink a pint of Louvain beer, across the street, at beautiful Pelagia’s place, the king of pubs or the pub of kings . . .”

*(He takes them by the arm and they all leave.)*

*“The one who resembles death most  
is the most unwilling to die.”*

*(Jean de La Fontaine)*

# The Old Man Who Does Not Want to Die

*(A bed, in which lies an old man in agony. At his bedside, a shadow wrapped in a wide black cloak.)*

THE OLD MAN

I cannot stand it any more, doctor, I cannot! . . .

THE SHADOW

It is not serious, you will die.

THE OLD MAN

Are you going to cure me?

THE SHADOW

I shall help you to die.

THE OLD MAN

But I do not want to die! . . .

THE SHADOW

I shall help you. You will see how easy it is.

THE OLD MAN

Are you a murderer? . . . I shall call my wife and children. . . .

THE SHADOW

They will not come. They know I am with you.

THE OLD MAN

You cannot do that! . . . Murder, murder! . . . Help, help! . . .

THE SHADOW

Do not shout like this. You shall see it is not difficult.

THE OLD MAN

You are not the doctor.

THE SHADOW

I kill all ills and I am your friend.

THE OLD MAN

I do not have any friends. They all died . . .

THE SHADOW

But I am still alive.

THE OLD MAN

Who are you?

THE SHADOW

Did you not guess yet?

THE OLD MAN

No.

THE SHADOW

I started warning you three years ago.

THE OLD MAN

I never saw you.

THE SHADOW

No, but I spoke to you.

THE OLD MAN

I did not hear you . . .

THE SHADOW

You did not want to hear me. But everything in you knew what I said.

THE OLD MAN

I do not understand you . . . What do you want? . . . Go away, go away! . . .

THE SHADOW

Do not be afraid . . . I will tell you what it is.

THE OLD MAN

What?

THE SHADOW

My secret.

THE OLD MAN

What secret?

THE SHADOW

The great secret.

THE OLD MAN

I do not want to know about it . . .

THE SHADOW

You shall know death . . .

THE OLD MAN

But I do not want to know it! . . .

THE SHADOW

You are seeing it. I am death . . .

THE OLD MAN

What?

THE SHADOW

I am your death.

THE OLD MAN

You do not look dead . . .

THE SHADOW

That is because I am alive.

THE OLD MAN

I do not believe . . . Go away! . . .

THE SHADOW

You will come with me.

THE OLD MAN

*(Clinging desperately to his bed.)*

Never, never! . . .

THE SHADOW

Follow me.

THE OLD MAN

Where would you take me?

THE SHADOW

In the other world, which is our world.

THE OLD MAN

I do not want to go. I am afraid.

THE SHADOW

Afraid of what?

THE OLD MAN

I have sinned.

THE SHADOW

There are no more sins in death.

THE OLD MAN

What will God say?

THE SHADOW

What you will say.

THE OLD MAN

Will He judge me?

THE SHADOW

You shall be your own judge. You are not afraid of yourself.

THE OLD MAN

No, but I am afraid of everything . . .

THE SHADOW

Nothing can hurt you.

THE OLD MAN

Whom are we going to meet?

THE SHADOW

No one.

THE OLD MAN

We are not going to see anybody?

THE SHADOW

And no one is going to see us.

THE OLD MAN

You are not going to leave me all alone?

THE SHADOW

I shall always be with you.

THE OLD MAN

Thank you. I trust you . . . But what am I going to say? What am I going to do?

THE SHADOW

You shall have nothing to do, nothing at all. It is very restful.

THE OLD MAN

But what will I look like? . . . For whom will they take me?

THE SHADOW

For what you are. An eternal being.

THE OLD MAN

Is that enough?

THE SHADOW

That is the answer to everything. They all are eternal.

THE OLD MAN

I will look as if I would be wrong . . .

THE SHADOW

One is always right in death.

THE OLD MAN

Yes, yes, you are right. I did not know everything . . .

THE SHADOW

Like all living, you did not know anything.

THE OLD MAN

Do you really mean it?

THE SHADOW

Nothing is more real than death.

THE OLD MAN

Listen, I am ready to follow you, since I have no choice . . . But what about all I am leaving behind?

THE SHADOW

Everything will remain as it is.

THE OLD MAN

Could I not take anything with me?

THE SHADOW

Nothing at all, since you will not need anything.

THE OLD MAN

What about the stock?

THE SHADOW

What stock?

THE OLD MAN

The stock exchange.

THE SHADOW

Ah, excellent! Everything is going up. You win  
666 dollars.

THE OLD MAN

*(Smiling.)*

I am glad.

THE SHADOW

Not everybody is. There are those who lose.

THE OLD MAN

Nobody is concerned with them . . . So, I shall not be judged right away?

THE SHADOW

You shall be your own judge, as I already told you.

THE OLD MAN

Will there be a last judgment?

THE SHADOW

What for? All will be forgotten . . . Nothing ages sooner than sin. Is there any wrong you wish to redress?

THE OLD MAN

Hum . . .

THE SHADOW

I do not mean anything very serious.

THE OLD MAN

I do not think so.

THE SHADOW

Of course, little dishonest things like everybody else . . . They do not matter in the infinite.

THE OLD MAN

What if I had committed a crime?

THE SHADOW

You? . . . You are not capable of such things.

THE OLD MAN

One never can tell. Anyhow, what if I had committed one?

THE SHADOW

You would condemn yourself.

THE OLD MAN

To what?

THE SHADOW

You would not understand if I would tell you.

THE OLD MAN

How do you act when you visit others?

THE SHADOW

But I do not visit others. I visit only you.

THE OLD MAN

Are you concerned with me only?

THE SHADOW

But of course. To each his own death, which will become his life.

THE OLD MAN

Just the same, I am worried.

THE SHADOW

Are you afraid of sleeping?

THE OLD MAN

No, since I know that I shall wake up again.

THE SHADOW

To die is to wake up.

THE OLD MAN

That is what we are told. But it is not sure.

THE SHADOW

If you would not wake up, you would sleep forever. Are you unhappy when you sleep?

THE OLD MAN

It will not be the same thing . . . Anyhow, I am suspicious . . . First of all, where will I be? I will be lost.

THE SHADOW

You shall be wherever you are and you shall always try to find yourself. Anyway, I shall always be with you.

THE OLD MAN

Wherever I shall be?

THE SHADOW

Wherever you shall be, since I shall be you and you shall be I, since we shall be all.

THE OLD MAN

I do not understand you at all . . .

THE SHADOW

You will learn to understand.

THE OLD MAN

Why are you telling me things I do not understand?

THE SHADOW

Because you do not understand anything.

THE OLD MAN

Do you understand what you tell me?

THE SHADOW

If not, I would not tell it to you.

THE OLD MAN

But how can you understand?

THE SHADOW

Because I know what you will know, as I am what you too will be.

THE OLD MAN

May I know it now?

THE SHADOW

Not as long as you remain in your body.

THE OLD MAN

But I want to remain in it.

THE SHADOW

That is out of the question. It is time to leave it.

THE OLD MAN

Do I have to leave it here?

THE SHADOW

Of course. What would you do with it there?  
It would be useless.

THE OLD MAN

Could we not wait for a while?

THE SHADOW

What for? Today or tomorrow, what difference  
does it make?

THE OLD MAN

You do not know what it means. One is attached  
to it. Do you have a body?

THE SHADOW

No, I have only wings to hide my not having  
any.

THE OLD MAN

Someone is at the door.

THE SHADOW

Yes, I can hear it.

THE OLD MAN

It is my old dog, looking for me . . . Oh, at least he does not desert me! . . . Open the door for him . . .

THE SHADOW

He will not come in if I open the door.

THE OLD MAN

But the door was not closed . . . He only has to push it with his muzzle . . . Pluto! Pluto! Come in! . . .

*(The dog pushes the door, comes in, takes a few steps and notices the Shadow. He turns around at once and leaves slowly, head and tail hanging low.)*

THE OLD MAN

He is afraid . . .

THE SHADOW

He is cold . . .

THE OLD MAN

So am I.

THE SHADOW

One gets used to it.

THE OLD MAN

Do they die too?

THE SHADOW

Nothing dies.

THE OLD MAN

Where do they go?

THE SHADOW

Where we all go.

THE OLD MAN

How did you come in here?

THE SHADOW

Through the dining room.

THE OLD MAN

Did you see the others?

THE SHADOW

What others?

THE OLD MAN

The living.

THE SHADOW

I saw them.

THE OLD MAN

What were they doing? Did they look worried?

THE SHADOW

No. . . .

THE OLD MAN

Were they sad?

THE SHADOW

I did not notice it.

THE OLD MAN

They do not know yet.

THE SHADOW

They were seated around the table, having dinner.

THE OLD MAN

What were they eating?

THE SHADOW

Fried filet of sole.

THE OLD MAN

Was it a nice fish?

THE SHADOW

Enormous, golden brown and crisp.

THE OLD MAN

Was it caught in Dieppe or in Trouville?

THE SHADOW

It did not tell me.

THE OLD MAN

I have a good cook.

THE SHADOW

I know. I was present at your meals . . .

THE OLD MAN

I did not have the slightest idea . . .

THE SHADOW

Coming through the dining room, I saw your daughter.

THE OLD MAN

I am not surprised.

THE SHADOW

I saw her death too . . .

THE OLD MAN

What death?

THE SHADOW

Your daughter's death.

THE OLD MAN

But she is alive.

THE SHADOW

But her death was there and I talked to it . . .

THE OLD MAN

To my daughter?

THE SHADOW

No, to her death. We well-bred deaths tell each other everything. . . .

THE OLD MAN

And what did it tell you?

THE SHADOW

That your daughter will not live long.

THE OLD MAN

How long?

THE SHADOW

Three months and six days.

THE OLD MAN

What is wrong with her?

THE SHADOW

She has a cancer on the left kidney.

THE OLD MAN

Does she suspect anything?

THE SHADOW

She thinks it is a lumbago.

THE OLD MAN

What about her physician?

THE SHADOW

He prescribes compresses and laxatives.

THE OLD MAN

My daughter has to be warned.

THE SHADOW

She would not understand.

THE OLD MAN

What about her physician?

THE SHADOW

Death does not speak to physicians.

THE OLD MAN

Why not?

THE SHADOW

Because they help death, without knowing it.

THE OLD MAN

Could they not cure her?

THE SHADOW

Not yet.

THE OLD MAN

Do they know that little?

THE SHADOW

They are learning.

THE OLD MAN

When will they be able to cure this ill?

THE SHADOW

It will take them three years, at least.

THE OLD MAN

Why?

THE SHADOW

It is time's wish.

THE OLD MAN

Was she born too soon?

THE SHADOW

She was born when time wanted it.

THE OLD MAN

But when will they know all?

THE SHADOW

Who?

THE OLD MAN

The physicians?

THE SHADOW

Nobody will ever know everything.

THE OLD MAN

Not even you?

THE SHADOW

Not even I.

THE OLD MAN

Why?

THE SHADOW

Because it is infinite.

THE OLD MAN

In the meantime, could they not cure me?

THE SHADOW

You are not sick.

THE OLD MAN

I am not sick, I who am about to die? What more do you need?

THE SHADOW

It is not illness that is killing you. It is time.

THE OLD MAN

Yes, but some live to be old, and some die young. It is not fair.

THE SHADOW

You forget, you are eighty years old.

THE OLD MAN

Not quite.

THE SHADOW

Just three weeks less. That is not enough to make you young . . .

THE OLD MAN

There is no justice! . . .

THE SHADOW

There is something better than justice.

THE OLD MAN

What is it?

THE SHADOW

You will see it in a minute.

THE OLD MAN

They leave me all alone.

THE SHADOW

Men are always alone when they die.

THE OLD MAN

Did they see you go through the dining-room?

THE SHADOW

People never see me in a dining room. They always look for me in cemeteries, where I never go. I do not like corpses.

THE OLD MAN

Others physicians should be called in. Specialists.

THE SHADOW

Specialists of agony? . . . I know them. I am the one who receives them when they arrive too late. They are almost always as ill as their patients and they die of the ills they pretend to cure.

THE OLD MAN

They might gain a few days.

THE SHADOW

The days gained in this way are lost just like the others.

THE OLD MAN

Be it only one hour! . . .

THE SHADOW

It would pass too. There is nothing to be afraid of . . .

THE OLD MAN

There is no hope left?

THE SHADOW

There is only one great hope . . .

THE OLD MAN

You do not know what those last moments are! . . .

THE SHADOW

I know them.

THE OLD MAN

Do you think I will be judged at once?

THE SHADOW

Should you be judged today or in twenty thousand years, what is the difference?

THE OLD MAN

I would like to confess my greatest sins to you.

THE SHADOW

I know them. They are not important. Just like games of ill-bred children. Why would anybody be concerned with them?

THE OLD MAN

I am afraid of God.

THE SHADOW

He is too great to hurt you.

THE OLD MAN

To find myself all of a sudden before Him!

THE SHADOW

You will not see Him.

THE OLD MAN

Do you not see Him?

THE SHADOW

No.

THE OLD MAN

Why?

THE SHADOW

Because we are within Him.

THE OLD MAN

Do not leave me alone! . . . They all abandon me! . . . You are all I have left! . . .

Oh, please give me your hand! Protect me! Protect me! . . .

THE SHADOW

Against whom, against whom?

THE OLD MAN

*(Clinging to the hand of Death.)*

Against everything, against you, against all . . .  
I choke, I suffocate . . .

THE SHADOW

I was waiting for that . . .

THE OLD MAN

Why I first, I alone, when all the others are still  
alive?

THE SHADOW

Be quiet.

THE OLD MAN

My heart stops beating.

THE SHADOW

You do not need it any more.

THE OLD MAN

But I am dying, I am dying! . . .

THE SHADOW

That is why you were born.

## THE OLD MAN

*(Uttering a dreadful cry.) Oh! . . . (He tries to lean forward, then falls back on his pillow.)*

## THE SHADOW

*(Rises, throws its cloak away and the form of an angel appears, with great white wings and head outlined in light. It comes close to the bed.)*

Come! I was your death. Now, I become your life . . . I am yourself, and I am taking you . . . Together we will live. . . . Come, we will live forever! . . .

*(One moment of darkness, then the window breaks with a crash. Wrapped in its wings, the Shadow and its warden disappear in the light.)*



















